

HISTORY
AND HUMAN RELATIONS

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THE ENGLISHMAN AND HIS HISTORY

THE STUDY OF MODERN HISTORY

GEORGE III, LORD NORTH AND THE PEOPLE

CHRISTIANITY AND HISTORY

THE ORIGINS OF MODERN SCIENCE

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HISTORY AND HUMAN RELATIONS

By

HERBERT BUTTERFIELD, M.A

*Professor of Modern History in the
University of Cambridge*

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THE TRAGIC ELEMENT IN MODERN INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

I

IN the nineteenth century, when many people were optimistic in their views of human nature, and confident that the course of progress was going to be continued into an indefinite future, there were one or two prophets who feared and foretold that the twentieth century would see great wars of peoples, popular military dictatorships and the harnessing of the machines of industry to the science of warfare. It is interesting to note that, without knowing whether one country or another was going to emerge as the chief offender, and without basing his prediction upon any view that Germany was likely to present a special problem to the European continent, a writer could still feel assured, a generation beforehand, that this age of terrible warfare was coming. He could see, in other words, that, apart from the emergence of a special criminal, the developments in the situation itself were driving mankind into an era of conflict. In the midst of battle, while we are

all of us in fighting mood, we see only the sins of the enemy and fail to reflect on those predicaments and dilemmas which so often develop and which underlie the great conflicts between masses of human beings. While there is battle and hatred men have eyes for nothing save the fact that the enemy is the cause of all the troubles; but long, long afterwards, when all passion has been spent, the historian often sees that it was a conflict between one half-right that was perhaps too wilful, and another half-right that was perhaps too proud; and behind even this he discerns that it was a terrible predicament, which had the effect of putting men so at cross-purposes with one another. This predicament is the thing which it is the purpose of this paper to examine; and first of all I propose to try to show how the historian comes to discover its existence.

If we consider the history of the historical writing that has been issued, generation after generation, on a given body of events, we shall generally find that in the early stages of this process of reconstruction the narrative which is produced has a primitive and simple shape. As one generation of students succeeds another, however, each developing the historiography of this particular subject, the narrative passes through certain typical stages until it is brought to a high and subtle form of organisation. It would be difficult to give names to these successive stages in the development of the historiography of a given theme, but there is an early period in the writing-up of a subject, particularly when the subject itself is one form or another of human conflict, which seems to me to belong to the class of literature

sometimes described as "Heroic". It does not matter whether the topic which the historian is writing about is the victory of Christianity in the Roman Empire, or the struggles of the modern scientists in the seventeenth century, or the case of either the French or the Russian Revolutions. There is a recognisable phase in the historical reconstruction or the chronicle writing which has distinctive features and shows a certain characteristic form of organisation; and on more than one occasion in my life I have found myself saying that this kind of historiography bears the marks of the Heroic age. It represents the early period when the victors write their own chronicles, gloat over the defeated, count their trophies, commemorate their achievements, and show how righteousness has triumphed. And it may be true that the narrative has a primitive sort of structure that we can recognise, but it is a structure that requires little thought on the part of the writers of the history; for it was ready-made for them all the time—it is nothing more than the sort of organisation that a narrative acquires from the mere fact that the author is taking sides in the conflict. We who come long afterwards generally find that this kind of history has overdramatised the struggle in its aspect as a battle of right versus wrong; and to us it seems that these writers refused to exercise imaginative sympathy over the defeated enemy, so that they lack the perspective which might have been achieved if they had allowed themselves to be driven to a deeper analysis of the whole affair. In England our own Whig interpretation of history is only a development from the "Heroic" way of formulating

the issues of human conflict—as though the parliamentarians of the seventeenth century were provoked to war by mere personal wickednesses and deliberate aggressions on the part of Charles I and his supporters.

Though I have no doubt that the progress of historiography to a higher level than this is really to be regarded as a collaborative achievement, I have always understood that the name of S. R. Gardiner is particularly associated with the developments which led to a drastic refocusing of these English constitutional conflicts of the seventeenth century. It seems to have been the case furthermore that with him as with other people the refocusing resulted from what in the last resort might be described as the method of taking compassion on the defeated. Gardiner's mode of procedure led him to be careful with the defeated party, and he tried by internal sympathetic infiltration really to find out what was in their minds. And this is a process to which there ought to be no limits, for historical imagination comes to its sublimest achievements when it can succeed in comprehending the people not like-minded with oneself. Once such a process is embarked upon, the truth soon emerges that it is an easy thing to produce a Whig history of a constitutional conflict or alternatively a Royalist version of the affair ; but it is no easy matter to comprise the two in a single survey, since clearly they cannot be just joined or added to one another. In reality you find that at every inch in your attempt to collate the outlooks of the two belligerent parties you are driven to a higher altitude—you have to find a kind of historical truth that lies on a higher plane before you

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can make the evidence square with itself, or secure a story that comprehends all the factors and embraces the purely partial visions of the two opposing sides. Then, after much labour, you may achieve something more like a stereoscopic vision of the whole drama. Similarly, if an English foreign secretary and an Austrian ambassador give curiously divergent reports of a conversation that they have had with one another, the historian would not be content merely to add the two reports together. Collating them inch by inch, he would use one document to enable him to see new folds of implication in the other. So he would be carried to a higher version of the whole affair—one which embraces the contradictions in the original accounts and even enables us to understand how the discrepancies should have occurred. In the long run the historian will not limit himself to seeing things with the eyes of the Royalist or with the eyes of the Roundhead; but, taking a loftier perspective which puts him in a position to embrace both, he will reach new truths to which both sides were blind—truths which will even enable him to see how they came to differ so much from one another.

When the historiography of the English seventeenth-century constitutional struggles has developed through the work of Gardiner and his successors, and has been brought to a higher state of organisation by virtue of processes somewhat on the pattern that I have described, what emerges is a new and drastically different formulation of the whole conflict. And this new way of presenting the entire issue has a peculiar characteristic which I wish to examine, because it shows us what the

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revised perspective really amounts to—it provides us with almost a definition of what is implied in the progress of historiography as it moves further away from the events that are being narrated, further away from the state of being contemporary history. The progress of historiography takes us away from that first simple picture of good men fighting bad; and not merely in the case of seventeenth-century England, but in one field of history after another we find that it contributes a new and most uncomfortable revelation—it gradually disengages the structural features of a conflict which was inherent in the dialectic of events. It shows us situations hardening, events tying themselves into knots, human beings faced by terrible dilemmas, and one party and another being driven into a corner. In other words, as the historiography of a given episode develops and comes to be further removed from the passions of those who were active in the drama, it uncovers at the basis of the story a fundamental human predicament—one which we can see would have led to a serious conflict of wills even if all men had been fairly intelligent and reasonably well-intentioned. Perhaps it was this reformulation of the conflict which Lord Acton had in mind when he suggested that it needs the historian to come on the scene at a later time to say what it was that these poor seventeenth-century Royalists and Roundheads were really fighting about.

In the new organisation of the narrative the personal goodness or badness of Charles I may still appear to be operative but it ceases to be the central issue, ceases to be the basis for the mounting of the whole story. We

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see the English monarchy coming into a serious predicament in this period in any case; and something of a parallel kind is seen to take place as we study the conflicts of the reign of George III. The central fact—the one that gives the new structure to the whole narrative—is a certain predicament, a certain situation that contains the elements of conflict irrespective of any special wickedness in any of the parties concerned; and the personal goodness or badness of Charles I or George III operates only, so to speak, on the margin of this, and becomes rather a fringing issue. So, while contemporary ways of formulating the human conflict have the structure of melodrama, the white hero fighting the black villain of the piece in a straight war of right versus wrong, historiography in the course of time leads us to transpose the lines of the picture and redraft the whole issue, especially as we come to comprehend more deeply the men who were not like-minded with ourselves. The higher historiography moves away from melodrama and brings out the tragic element in human conflict.

If all this is true, then we who are so deeply engaged in an age of conflict are under an obligation not to be too blindly secure, too wilfully confident, in the contemporary ways of formulating that conflict; and it is incumbent upon us not quite to forget how future historiography may expose the limitations of our vision. If all this is true, then an issue is drawn between the view which the contemporary historian so often tends to possess and the view associated with a higher and riper stage of historiography—the view of what I hope I may

be allowed to call "academic history". The issue is drawn because the two kinds of history differ in the actual structure of the narrative and formulation of the theme, unless the contemporary history has been written after great prayer and fasting, which seldom happens to be the case. If what I have said is true, then the examination of the actual structure of a piece of historical narrative can be at any rate one of the tests of the intellectual quality of the work and the genuineness of its historical perspective. Furthermore, if any people should desire to envisage the events of their own day with a certain historical-mindedness, then we have at least a clue to the kind of direction in which they should move in their attempt to achieve the object. For if we realise the way in which historical science develops in the course of time—if we know even only one of the laws which govern its development as it proceeds further away from the merely contemporary point of view—then we have at any rate a hint of the kind of thing which historical perspective requires of us; and we can be to that degree more hopeful in our attempt to hasten or anticipate the future verdict of historical science. Behind the great conflicts of mankind is a terrible human predicament which lies at the heart of the story; and sooner or later the historian will base the very structure of his narrative upon it. Contemporaries fail to see the predicament or refuse to recognise its genuineness, so that our knowledge of it comes from later analysis—it is only with the progress of historical science on a particular subject that men come really to recognise that there was a terrible knot almost beyond the ingenuity

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of man to untie. It represents therefore a contribution that historical science itself has added to our interpretation of life—one which leads us to place a different construction on the whole human drama, since it uncovers the tragic element in human conflict. In historical perspective we learn to be a little more sorry for both parties than they knew how to be for one another.

II

The international situation of the present day is so difficult, and we are so greatly in need of a deeper vision that we ought to be ready to clutch at anything which might have a chance of leading us to fresh thoughts or new truths. We might ask, therefore, whether in the modern world there is any hint of the kind of human predicament that we have been considering and whether the idea can be of any use to us when we are seeking light on our contemporary problem. For the purpose of illustrating an argument I should like to describe and examine an imaginary specimen case in diplomacy—one which will enable me to isolate and to put under the microscope that very factor in human conflict which so often emerges at a later time, when historians have long been reflecting on the issue, but which is so often concealed from contemporaries in the heat of action and in all the bustle of life. For the purpose of assuring that the issue shall confront us more vividly I should like to present this imaginary instance in the guise of

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something real, something which will come to us as an actual problem of the present day.

Let us suppose, then, that the Western Powers on the one hand and Russia on the other hand have just defeated Germany and have reduced that country to total surrender. And let it be granted that the Western Powers, confronted by the Russian colossus, feel that they cannot afford to allow the defeated Germany to be drawn into the orbit of the Communist system; while Russia, for her part, faced by what to her is the no less formidable West, is ridden by the mathematically equal and opposite fear that the balance will be turned against her for all the future if Germany is enlisted in the non-Communist group. Here then is a case in which the objects of the two parties are mutually exclusive, since if the one side is satisfied the other feels the situation to be utterly desperate; and it is a case not difficult to imagine, since it might be argued (though we need not commit ourselves to the fact) that it has actually existed in our world since 1945. If we can take this situation for granted for the purpose of argument, and then persuade our minds to perform a piece of abstraction, we may arrive at a result upon which we can do some mathematics. What is required is that we should stretch our imagination to the point of envisaging this particular international predicament in a purer form than either it or anything else ever exists in history. Let us assume that the Soviet group of States on the one hand and the Western group on the other are absolutely level in point of virtue and in the moral qualities of the statesmen who conduct their affairs. Further, we will postulate that

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the level shall be a reasonably high one, that the statesmen on both sides are not saints, of course, competing with one another only in self-renunciation—a situation which would defeat our mathematics—but are moderately virtuous men, as men go in politics, anxious that their countries shall come to no harm, and moved by national self-interest to a degree that we must regard as comparatively reasonable. We will postulate that they have just those faults which men can have who feel themselves to be righteous and well-disposed—both sides anxious to avoid a war, but each desperately unsure about the intentions of the other party; each beset by the devils of fear and suspicion, therefore; and each side locked in its own system of self-righteousness.

Allowing for all this—which means that the problem before us is presented in what I should call its optimum setting—then I should assert that here is a grand dialectical jam of a kind that exasperates men—a terrible deadlock that makes ordinary human beings even a little more wilful than they ordinarily are. Here is the absolute predicament and the irreducible dilemma—for I shall have something to say later to those who assert that it is no genuine predicament at all, and that every schoolboy knows the solution to the problem. Even granting throughout the whole of human nature no more than the ordinary amount of human wilfulness such as we ourselves may be said to possess, here are the ingredients for a grand catastrophe. The greatest war in history could be produced without the intervention of any great criminals who might be out to do deliberate harm in the world. It could be produced between two

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Powers both of which were desperately anxious to avoid a conflict of any sort.

Though the example that I have given is a purely hypothetical one, as I have said—for in the complicated realm of history so clear a pattern will never be found in its absolute purity—still there is a sense in which it typifies an essential human predicament; it illustrates a certain recalcitrancy that may lie in events as such, an intractability that can exist in the human situation itself. Here, in other words, is the mathematical formula—or perhaps one of the formulas—for a state of things which produces what I should call the tragic element in human conflict. As regards the real world of international relations I should put forward the thesis (which, if it is true, would seem to me to be not an unimportant one) that this condition of absolute predicament or irreducible dilemma lies in the very geometry of human conflict. It is at the basis of the structure of any given episode in that conflict. It is at the basis of all the tensions of the present day, representing even now the residual problem that the world has not solved, the hard nut that we still have to crack. So far as the historian is concerned, here is the basic pattern for all narratives of human conflict, whatever other patterns may be superimposed upon it later. Indeed, as I have said, when the historical reconstruction of a given episode has been carried on for generation upon generation, this is the structure the story tends to acquire as it becomes revised and corrected and reshaped with the passage of time. This tragedy of the absolute human predicament enters into the very fabric of historical narrative in proportion as

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we move further away from being mere contemporary historians.

- Turning again to the hypothetical case which we have been using as our pattern, we may note that not only could the greatest war in history be produced between two Powers both of which were moderately virtuous and desperately anxious to prevent a conflict, but such a struggle, far from being a nice, quiet and reasonable affair, would be embittered by the heat of moral indignation on both sides, just because each was so conscious of its own rectitude, so enraged with the other for leaving it without any alternative to war. It is the peculiar characteristic of the situation I am describing—the situation of what I should call Hobbesian fear—that you yourself may vividly feel the terrible fear that you have of the other party, but you cannot enter into the other man's counter-fear, or even understand why he should be particularly nervous. For you know that you yourself mean him no harm, and that you want nothing from him save guarantees for your own safety; and it is never possible for you to realise or remember properly that since he cannot see the inside of your mind, he can never have the same assurance of your intentions that you have. As this operates on both sides the Chinese puzzle is complete in all its interlockings—and neither party sees the nature of the predicament he is in, for each only imagines that the other party is being hostile and unreasonable. It is even possible for each to feel that the other is wilfully withholding the guarantees that would have enabled him to have a sense of security. The resulting conflict

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is more likely to be hot with moral indignation—one self-righteousness encountering another—than it would have been if the contest had lain between two hard-headed eighteenth-century masters of *realpolitik*. In such circumstances the contemporary historians on each side will tend to follow suit, each locked in the combative views of his own nation, and shrieking morality of that particular kind which springs from self-righteousness. That is one of the reasons why contemporary history differs so greatly from what I have called academic history. In all that I am saying I am really asserting, moreover, that the self-righteous are not the true moralists either in history or in life. Those who are less self-righteous may face the world's problems more squarely, even when they are less clever, than other people.

Pandit Nehru, when he was speaking at Columbia University, made a somewhat moving criticism of both East and West, because in his view they were intent upon what he called a race in armaments. Some people even say that a race in armaments is a cause of war—but nobody actually wills a “race”; and I personally would rather pity both sides than blame them, for I think that the race in armaments, and even the war that seems to result from it, are caused rather by that tragic human predicament, that situation of Hobbesian fear. All that we can say is that the predicament would not exist, of course, if all the world were like St. Francis of Assisi, and if human nature in general were not streaked with cupidities. The predicament, the race in armaments and the war itself are explained in the last resort, therefore, as the result of man's universal sin. Similarly,

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suppose two great groups of alliances have been at virtual deadlock for some years, so that even neutral States have begun to assert that war is inevitable—meaning that war is inevitable, human nature being what it is. Suppose you have such a situation, and then one party to the predicament becomes over-exasperated and makes too wilful a decision; suppose in particular that he does it because he thinks that somebody must take a strong line at last; and we will say that he even intends to bluff, but the bluff does not come off and so a great war is brought about. Then, though this man has done wrong I could not personally agree that he should be charged as the sole author of the war and loaded with all the misery of it as though he were the only villain in a melodrama. I could not agree that he should be regarded as guilty in just the way he would have been if he had fallen unprovoked on a flock of innocent lambs. When war arises in such circumstances, its true origin must be traced rather to the whole predicament; and on this basis the melodrama re-shapes itself, assuming more of the character of tragedy—the kind of tragedy in which it is so to speak the situation that gives one a heartache, and sometimes, as in the case of *King Lear*, what seem to be little sins may have colossally disproportionate consequences.

The truth is that when faced by this human predicament—this final unsolved problem of human relations—the mind winces and turns to look elsewhere, and statesmen, for their ease, pile all the blame on the handiest scapegoat. Men fix their attention upon what in reality are fringing issues, and they remove these

from their proper place on the fringe to the centre of the picture—you can evade all problems by saying that everything is due to the wickedness of King Charles I. The point can be illustrated best perhaps by the process of looking for a moment at its converse. Let us make it clear to ourselves: if in our present-day crises Stalin and his colleagues could be imagined to be as virtuous and well-intentioned as the statesmen of the Western world, still our predicament would exist, and there would be the same dilemma concerning the future of Germany—especially as we, because we look at him from the outside, could never be sure that Stalin's intentions were as good as ours. In any case we could never be sure that if we put our trust in him we should not really be placing weapons into the hands of some villain who might succeed to his power next year, supposing he passed off the stage. Of course, if we are in this same international predicament and the Russians happen to be thieves or adventurers or aggressors or drunkards or sexual perverts to boot, then that is an extra boon which Providence throws into the lap, so to speak, of the Western Powers—the kind of boon which, to judge from our assertions over a number of centuries, Providence has generally vouchsafed to the British in their wars. Even in such circumstances, however, we are evading an essential problem if we lose sight of the basic predicament—a predicament so exasperating sometimes that it can be responsible for making people more wicked and desperate than they otherwise would have been. It is like the case of the person who owed his neighbour £5 and refused to pay it on the ground that

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the neighbour was an immoral man and would make a bad use of the money. The moralising might not be without its justice, but in this case it would be introduced as a screen to cover a delinquency of one's own. Or it is like the case of those people who so often, as in 1792, would judge a revolution entirely by its atrocities—evading the structural problem and pouncing upon an incidental issue. I have no doubt it would be a boon to me, supposing I were challenged in debate on a point of history, if I could say: "Take no notice of this man; he has just come out of prison after serving sentence for forging a cheque". I should be picking up a fringing issue and turning it into the central issue; and in this way I might use the other person's immorality most unfairly for the purpose of evading a challenge that happened to be inconvenient to myself.

Not only may the problem of war present itself in the acutest possible form, irrespective of any difference in morality between the contending parties, but the whole problem and the whole predicament that we are discussing exists absolutely, irrespective of any differences in ideology. All the evidence that we have—and it seems to me that we have had very much in the last one hundred years for this particular case—shows that the basic problem would not be fundamentally altered, and would certainly not be avoided, supposing what we were confronted with at the moment were all the power of modern Russia in the hands of the Tsars, instead of the regime of the Soviet. The predicament would not be removed even if there were no Communism in the world at all, or supposing that every State involved in

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the problem were a Christian State in the sense that so many countries were Christian throughout most of the centuries of modern times. Even supposing Russia were liberal and democratic—supposing the great Powers on either side were so situated that their populations could put pressure on the government in the very matter of foreign policy—still the populations would be just as fearful or suspicious or exasperated or angry as the foreign offices themselves. Indeed it seems to be generally the case that they are more so, unless the knowledge of the predicament is withheld from them. In any case we did not have our present fears and panics on the subject of Communism till Communism had come to be identified with the formidable European position of Russia as it has existed since 1945.

In so far as international conflicts are concerned, therefore, I am suggesting that after many of the more incidental features of the case have been peeled away, we shall find at the heart of everything a kernel of difficulty which is essentially a problem of diplomacy as such. In fact I personally think that in the international crises of our time, we are muddying the waters and darkening our own minds and playing the very game the Russians want us to play, when we mix our drinks and indulge in a so-called "ideological" foreign policy, forgetting that the fundamental problems exist, as I have said, independent of the differences in ideology. The truth is that we could very well say to the Russians: "We would not have allowed you to steal this particular march on us, or to encroach in this particular direction or to dominate defeated Germany even if you had been

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a Christian empire as in the time of the Tsars". And, given the distribution of power which existed in Europe in 1945, the old Tsardom would have dominated Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and the Balkans, just as the Soviets do now, though it would have used something different from the Marxian ideology to facilitate the execution of its purpose. All this carries with it the further corollary that we ought to attach very great importance to a study which in England at least has gravely declined and is woefully out of fashion, namely, pure diplomatic history regarded as a technique in itself; for it was just the characteristic of this technical diplomatic history to lay bare the essential geometry of the problem and isolate for examination the fundamental predicament that required a solution. Indeed what I am doing in this paper is to elicit the moral implications of that whole system of thought which is invoked in diplomatic history—and I am asserting that the new diplomacy of our time, as well as its dependent forms of historiography, though they are more self-righteous than the old, are in reality less moral, at any rate in certain respects.

We have already noted, however, that in the complicated realm of historical events, no pattern ever appears in a pure and unadulterated form—and certainly, when a diplomatic issue is presented to us for resolution, we can never say that both sides are exactly balanced in point of morality, exactly equal in the virtues of their leading statesmen. The original issue may be aggravated and greatly intensified by the aggressiveness of a politician in one country or the barbarism of a regime in another

country; and our fear of the expansion of Russia is considerably increased if Russia implies either a Tsarist despotism or the Communist system. All the same, it is wrong to overlook that original diplomatic predicament which forms the kernel of the problem requiring to be solved; and it is a mistake to allow the incidental matters or the attendant circumstances to drive that essential issue out of our minds. I could express the point, for example—or I could illustrate its implications—by noting that we should not like to be conquered by Russia even if Russia were not a Communist State. Alternatively I might say that supposing it could be made out that there were general reasons for conceding that Spain had a right to Gibraltar, it is not clear that the British would be justified in withholding that possession merely because they disliked the present regime in Spain and disapproved of General Franco. It was perhaps one of the virtues of the older type of diplomacy that in time of war it did not allow itself to be entirely obsessed by the question of the responsibility for the resort to violence—did not merely hark back continually to the actual occasion of the outbreak—but recognised that the war itself was partly tragedy, that is to say, partly due to a predicament. Attention was concentrated rather on the kind of world which would be produced once the victory had been achieved, and the aim was not so much to punish the culprits, but rather to make sure that there was a tolerable balance of forces at the finish. In times past it would have been realised that the most essential thing of all is to guard against the kind of war which, if you win it absolutely, will

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produce another "predicament" worse than the one you started with.

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III

The great diplomatic issue that emerged—or rather re-emerged—in Europe in the early years of this present century concerned the question whether Russia on the one hand or Germany on the other hand should dominate those countries of Central and Eastern Europe which run from Poland, through Czechoslovakia and Hungary to what we now call Yugoslavia and the Balkans. This is how it came about that the occasion for the war of 1914 was an episode involving Bosnia and Serbia, while the occasion for the war of 1939 occurred in regions concerning which Lloyd George had long before expressed his apprehensions—namely in Czechoslovakia and in Poland. Those two wars were embarrassing in certain respects for Great Britain, for though we claimed that we were fighting for democracy we were allied in the former case with Tsarist Russia, where the Jews had been oppressed, and the Poles were held in subjection, and the Baltic nations were prevented from achieving statehood; while in the case of the Second World War we were the allies of the Soviet system. So far as I can interpret European history in general, the line of central European States which were in question—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, etc.—can flourish beautifully when both Germany and Russia are reduced to impotence, as they were in the fifteenth

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century, and as they came to be again for a period after 1919. The same States may preserve their independence provided both Germany and Russia are strong, so that when the giant on the one side seeks to oppress them they can look for help to the giant on the other side. It is bound to be sad, however, for Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc., if only one of these giants is left standing and there is no other great Power in the vicinity to challenge or check this monster. Indeed, we have seen how even in the last few years America, England and the nations of Western Europe have been unable to prevent this whole line of States from coming almost entirely into the power of the Russian bear. Even in our moment of victory we had to let these States fall under what we regarded as the oppressor—a fact even more remarkable (when the whole situation is considered) than the case of Munich itself. Supposing wars to be necessary and unavoidable—as indeed they seem to be sometimes—it might still be a question whether we have conducted ours with a right mentality or with a proper grasp of the essential issues. In respect of the great diplomatic problem of the twentieth century, we may wonder sometimes whether Russia was so much more virtuous than Germany as to make it worth the lives of tens of millions of people in two wars to ensure that she (as a Communist system—or even as a Tsarist empire) should gain such an unchallenged and exclusive hold over that line of Central European States as Germany never had in all her history, and never could have had unless Russia had first been wiped out as a great State. For it is just that kind of question—the

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question of the redistribution of territorial power—which war decides. We cannot actually spread democracy by war, which barbarises peoples and tends rather to make democracy more impracticable over a greater area of the European continent.

The supporters of the new diplomacy, which has emerged since the opening of the epoch of world-wars, like to tell us that the whole problem we have been discussing does not exist, because it ought not to exist. In any case, there is no Chinese puzzle at all, they say, for, whatever the issue might be, we could easily dispose of it by referring it to a conference or sending it to the United Nations. Against these specialists in wishful thinking it must be asserted that the kind of human predicament which we have been discussing is not merely so far without a solution, but the whole condition is a standing feature of mankind in world-history. If the whole of Russia and the entire body of its satellites were to be buried under the deepest oceans from this very night, the predicament would still be with us to-morrow, though the terms of it would be transposed by a regrouping of the remaining Powers. Supposing there were no Russian Power in existence, supposing Germany herself were lying prostrate as a beaten and ineffective nation, and supposing the help of America were not essential to everybody concerned—all that fine show of unanimity between the countries of Western Europe, all that co-operation induced by the threat of an immediate danger, would break down into bitterness and anarchy. And if the issue which divides the world at a given moment were referred to a conference table,

then, though many good things might be achieved, we should not have eliminated the predicament which was most crucial—we should merely find it transplanted into the bosom of the conference itself. That is why those people were wrong who despaired of the League of Nations because it failed in the greatest of tests. Wise men had always given the warning that it could not cope with the last extremes of crisis; and it was wrong to forget how many good things it had in fact achieved. Even the organisation of the United Nations has not proved essentially different in this respect from the case of the League; and though the problem is transposed somewhat, so that different nations and different issues now produce the stumbling-block, the new international order has not in fact prevented Powers from remaining armed as never before, and racing one another in the development of the atomic bomb.

It was once my feeling that if, in a European crisis, Great Britain pressed for the assembly of a conference, while Germany rejected that procedure, then Germany was clearly in the wrong and my own country was plainly on the side of the angels. Unfortunately it comes to be borne in upon one's mind as one studies these matters that conferences themselves are only too liable to be the arena for a kind of power politics; and the greater States, in the very nature of things, hold a predominance in them which bears some proportion to their might. It even became evident to me that sometimes it was calculable in advance how the votes would be distributed if a conference met, since these would be

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affected by the alliances and affiliations of the various governments concerned, and might even be decided by sympathies in ideology. Let us suppose it to have become clear that if a conference were assembled the result was a foregone conclusion and Germany was so to speak outvoted in advance. I began to wonder whether in such a case she was necessarily more selfish than anybody else when she refused to put her head in the noose—I began to wonder also whether the virtues of Britain were quite so much to boast about when they coincided so nicely with her interests. This argument might be projected on to a wider canvas altogether; for without doubting the good intentions of the men who have ruled England in the last few decades, one must note that if a Machiavellian imperialist statesman had happened to be governing us with purely egotistical purposes in view, he would have found the conference method the best way of promoting our national interests, indeed the only way in view of the decline of actual British power and in view of the general distribution of forces in the world. In other words Great Britain in our time has been in a position which we must regard as fortunate in a certain respect, in that the policy which altruism would have dictated to her happened to be the same as the one which self-interest would demand—so that, though the conference method has been promoted so often by Englishmen who were only conscious of it as a noble aspiration, it has also been described as the only method of *realpolitik* left to us. The conference method is more advantageous to us than any decision to measure forces with a rival, even if the voting should

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go against us on occasion in a matter of some moment to us.

But when I take this crucial case and imagine a real predicament—when I think of the kind of issue which decides whether a State or an empire goes up or down in the world—then I find myself in a position of some doubt even in regard to Great Britain. Supposing it to be the case that the loss of our overseas possessions would bring about a serious reduction in the standard of living of the British people, and supposing a motion were to be proposed that all forms of colony or of subjection or of dependency were to be abolished through the wide world—I, in a situation of this kind, should like to know what the attitude of the government of my country would be. In particular I should like to know what its attitude would be towards the idea of submitting such an issue to a conference or assembly in which the Communists were known in advance to have the majority of votes. I should like to know what my country would do on the assumption that we still had enough power to make a valid and independent choice. Where the conflict is really a cut-throat one it seems to me that the conference method does not put an end to the predicament but merely changes the locality and the setting of it. The whole method is liable to break down if either the Communists or the non-Communists can be fairly sure in advance that on critical issues the other party is going to have the majority. And in any case I am not clear that anybody has ever devised a form of political machinery that could not somehow or other be manipulated by ill-intentioned people in the possession of power.

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Like the Germans, we sometimes allow the academic and professorial mind to have too much sway among us ; and with us this has helped to give currency to the heresy that everything can be settled if men will only sit together at a table—a view which may be justified on many occasions but which does not prove to be correct when the conflicting parties are in the extreme kind of predicament we have been discussing. Where the predicament really exists and the question is one of those which decide whether States are to go up or down in the world, those who do have the power will not allow themselves to be talked or voted out of their strategic positions, any more than empires will go under without putting up a fight, supposing a fight to be possible at all. Europeans have had hundreds of years in which to discuss theological problems, but mere discussion round a table has not brought them into agreement on the disputed points. This was the kind of issue upon which men can at worst agree to disagree, though I note that ecclesiastical systems were slow to come to this arrangement and they went on fighting one another, using weapons that kill, as long as it was feasible to fight at all. But if two different countries are claiming Gibraltar it is not so easy to settle the matter by saying that the parties can agree to disagree. The conference method does not get rid of the difficulty—it merely transplants the whole predicament into another place.

While we are at war, and the conflict is a matter of life or death for us, we may hardly have any part of our minds free for devoting to a general survey of the

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whole predicament in which the human race is standing. When the war is over, however, a time of healing ought to come, and it is our duty to carry all our problems to further analysis. Politicians, in the hurry of affairs and in the stress of conflict, may hardly have an opportunity to cover the problem in an all-embracing survey, for we must regard them as generally acting under great pressures. We in universities, however—and especially those of us who study history—have a duty to think in longer terms and seize upon the problem precisely where the difficulties are most challenging. We ought to be straining our minds to think of new things and to enlarge the bounds of understanding; for though our enlarged understanding of the problem will not necessarily prevent war, it may remove some of the unwisdom which has made victory itself so much more disappointing in its results than it otherwise might have been.

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I

THE twentieth century saw the human race gain possession of forms of power so colossal that previous generations, in their wildest dreams, had had no inkling of such possibilities. It saw the human race acquire forms of knowledge which made men almost feel themselves gods, feel that the human mind was the monarch of the universe. It saw individuals gaining freedom in realms of activity which for thousands of years had been thought to be governed by iron laws of necessity. Men even imagined that they could play Providence for themselves, control the course of history, and mould the shape of the whole future. They thought that with all this knowledge, this power, this freedom, everything was open to the human will—man had only to will a thing and he could have it. And at the very moment when we seemed to be coming to the peak of human history we discover the most crucial problem of all—precisely this problem of the human will. For

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this human will can determine evil; it can meditate the destruction of cities, civilisations and peoples; it can behave in a manner that is known to be suicidal. For much of the world the whole problem remains almost where it was thousands of years ago. And men who to-day make machines and know what the stars are made of and can move mountains are almost as helpless before it as their ancestors ever were in the recorded past.

The twentieth century had run only a fraction of its course when there opened a war that was to end all wars, presumably by removing the last pocket of evil, the special evil that was Germany. Not content to limit war or to localise it, as previous generations had tried to do, and not content to prevent the next war from coming just yet, it would have nothing less than the abolition of war for ever; and no age went so high in its international dreams. It transpires, however, that our generation is not only peculiarly one of great wars, but that now more than ever before in history we must live with the possibility of war in mind. In the devising of the apparatus of destruction our scientists must take care not to be outstripped for a moment by their colleagues in a country that may become our enemy. Now all nerves must be stretched all the time and every ruffling of the diplomatic waters must be a crisis. The very means that we have taken to establish peace and internationalism have made the situation worse, with less foothold for hope than in the years before 1914. One thing we have not solved, and that is the vexed problem of human relations.

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A further great problem of the mid-twentieth century—the fundamental general problem of our time—is connected with the ones already mentioned. It springs from the fact that over a great portion of the world there exists what we might call a defect of civilisation which makes democratic government as we understand it an impossibility. Over a considerable part of the European continent a serious collapse of civilisation has actually taken place; and it is this that concerns us more intimately. It is necessary to stop imagining it as a collapse of civilisation which may take place in certain circumstances—it is one which is already with us. In this sense the Dark Ages have actually returned, and if so far we have been spared in this country, we must remember that in France and Italy the danger has been very serious indeed. The collapse has occurred primarily in those countries where government and society have broken down as a result of war, invasion and defeat; and even phenomena such as Nazism, Fascism and Communism are not really the cause of the breakdown, but rather the result—it is blindness to ignore the fact that they take their effective rise from the war of 1914. The first serious victim of this process was Russia in 1917, Russia even before any revolution had occurred. It was not Communism that broke down the society and the structure and the culture of the old Russia, but the catastrophe of war itself. Since 1917 it has been demonstrated in one country after another that revolutions of the modern kind—Communism, Fascism, National Socialism, etc.—arise out of the elements of disintegration and demoralisation

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produced by war. And what we are confronted with is the problem of modern barbarism—the problem of people who can manage motor-cars and radios and who can understand the utilitarian adjustment of means and ends in the material world, but consider the finer subtleties of civilisation a luxury and a superfluity, and have no notion of what is due to personality.

The human will, the problem of human relations and the values of personality—these then are the critical points in a civilisation that has come to put all its industry and ingenuity into mere things.

Sometimes it has been a reproach against modern Christians that they themselves have had nothing particular to contribute towards the solution of the fundamental problems of our contemporary world. Sometimes it is true that Christians have tended merely to support what the world in general wanted, or they have been too content merely to second their own nation in its belligerencies. And no doubt Christians, once they attempt to give their opinions on the problems of their time, very soon start quarrelling with one another. There are many answers to the charge that religion has no message; or at least there are different answers to be given at different levels of argument or analysis. It may be useful to discuss one of these, and to ask how far, even in a case where it is often thought that Christian teaching only coincides with ordinary mundane assumptions, there is not an ethical difference which means that religion has something of its own to say on all those issues in which human personality is involved. Precisely when matters are brought to the crucial point, a reference

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to the first principles of religion may become extremely pertinent.

II

It would perhaps be generally agreed that if all our ordinary rules and precepts are to be referred in the last resort to one ultimate law which regulates the conduct of life and applies to all circumstances and stands as the final measure of all action, then that law must be much more flexible than our ordinary formulas and regulations, and indeed must be in a certain sense almost a definition of elasticity itself. At the same time, if it is to provide us with a genuine standard for the judgment of human conduct, that law must not be merely cloudy and amorphous ; and therefore in another sense it is essential to assert its definiteness, its importunity and the clarity of its insistences. It must be capable of operating effectively on people and showing perceptible and even measureable results.

For those who follow the New Testament the ultimate principle in question is that law of Christian love which comprises amongst other things all that we know of charity or of charitable-mindedness. For the Christian this is not only the first of laws but it is a unique one—it stands through time as the source of all others that might be prescribed. And it is absolute. If we can imagine anything more charitable that we might have

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alone in any given conjuncture, then we have so far come short of the law. But if we cannot imagine anything more charitable than the thing we actually did do, even then we are not exempt; for that inability is itself no doubt owing to the narrowness of our spiritual nature. In these circumstances any judgment on our actions or conduct will be apt to translate itself into a judgment on the thinness or the poverty of our spiritual nature. It has become one of the typical commonplaces of our tradition, therefore, to submerge the question of what a man does in the profounder question of what he is.

In any case, here is not the kind of law which merely prohibits our doing a certain thing regarded as wrong in an absolute sense; or even the kind of law which specifies the particular actions that human beings are obliged to do. It is a law capable of commanding men to do something which nobody has ever been instructed to do before, something perhaps which nobody in the world has ever hitherto thought of. That is to say, it is a principle calculated to carry a human being to unpredictable readjustments of conduct or of attitude; and in the lives of saints it can be seen to have operated more like an instruction to adventure and originality, even carrying the surprises to the point of eccentricity. Here is a law, then, which cannot really be broken up into specific injunctions, for its implications are developed anew in every fresh human situation that arises; and all that can be done even in the New Testament—even in the Gospels—is to illustrate its workings in certain types of conjuncture, as in the case of praying for your

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persecutors or turning the other cheek. St. Augustine could formulate the whole aspect of the resulting situation in the injunction: "Love God and do what you like". But it would appear that those whom Christ has made free hardly dare to believe in their liberty.

Furthermore, the doctrine of love not only claims to provide the principle which should guide our thoughts about human behaviour and the general law which it is our duty to follow in life. It comprises, also, the very dynamic behind right conduct and it points us to the actual mainspring of virtuous action. In this way, of course, it differs radically from any of the sort of things which we regard as merely ethical ideas or moral precepts. The Christian system is founded on the fact that there are things which men will do for love which they are unable to do (as the New Testament repeatedly points out) by the external pressure or the tedious insistences of mere ethical command. If we compare the result with that morality which consists in mere obedience to sets of commandments, it will be seen that when the Christian view appeared in its totality and as a rounded whole it implied nothing less than a radical transformation of the moral order.

It was once the case that the kind of righteousness upon which men insisted was gravely confused and governed by the demands of what we should regard as ritual and ceremonial. A new kind of righteousness develops when men insist that God will not be satisfied with burnt offerings and that He demands justice and a certain consideration for the poor and weak. We can find in the Old Testament actual evidence of the conflict

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between these points of view, and can see how the world came to pass from the one to the other. One of the great themes of all parts of the New Testament, however, is the transition to a higher righteousness still, the transition to the view that love is the fulfilling of the Law. It amounts to the discovery of a new posture that man should assume under the sun, a different role that he is to play in a human drama that is now differently construed. Christians themselves have not always remembered to keep on the right side of this transition, and that is why one of their own dangers has constantly been the legalism or the Pharisaism that the New Testament condemns. Since we are not all St. Augustines it comes to be held that we need to be guided by specific rules which work out some of the practical consequences of our fundamental principle. But these subordinate precepts too easily petrify and turn into absolute laws, so that churchmen even lag behind other people sometimes when fresh formulas of action are needed to meet new occasions. It is easy to forget that the workaday precepts and subordinate regulations need constantly to be rechecked against the fundamental principle, the ultimate law of love.

Now, this Christian law of love lends itself to easy secularisation, and it cannot be too strongly stated that it is liable to a serious impoverishment in the process. Nothing is more remarkable—to take only one example—than the way in which the precept “Love your neighbour” can be carried to its actual inversion through the intervention of a few abstract nouns. And so loose is our common use of words that some men cannot

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imagine that they have made any difference when they have transformed the precept into something like "Work for society" or "Serve the State". They fail to notice that, instead of actual people, some abstract noun or political-science concept has been inserted as the real end, and to this more artificial object human beings are regarded as subservient. The Hitlers of the world do carry a certain plausibility sometimes when they call upon young men to sacrifice their private egotisms and immolate themselves for the good of Germany; but even self-sacrifice is a monstrosity when something other than human beings is envisaged as its object; and, sliding down this inclined plane, men will soon be killing or betraying their actual next-door neighbours for the sake of the idea of the State. A dangerous conjuring-trick is liable to be involved if we even turn "Love your neighbour" into "Love mankind"; for it is easy to love the collective noun rather than people, or to reserve one's compassion for strangers at the other end of the world. And some only have charity for the generations to be born in the far future; and, once again, it is just the real live human beings, close at hand, who are apt to be overlooked. Some men have been so devoted to a cause—one which indeed they may have taken up originally out of a real compassion for their fellow-creatures—or they may have become so egotistically attached to their own plan of salvation for the human race—that they have been ready to ride over men's broken bodies to secure their purposes. And in any case some people who work for human causes do not realise how much they may be

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moved by their hatreds rather than their loves—how much they really hate Germany rather than love England, or envy the capitalist more than they actually care for the poor. It must be stressed therefore that the precept “Love your neighbour” carries particular ethical implications, which are absent from many of the maxims that run as commonplaces in the world at large. The pith and marrow of the injunction are in its concreteness and its immediacy—its avoidance of the abstract noun.

So love of one's neighbour means a living love of actual men—not love of man in the abstract merely, or even of mankind as a collective noun; and not love of the mere shadows of generations yet unborn. And our neighbour is any man as he actually comes into our orbit, however indirect the relationship that is established with him, and however momentary the contact. All men are our neighbours, in fact, as soon as they come within the range of our thinking in any way. A pious friend of mine continually tells me that we are bidden to love our neighbour but not necessarily to like him; and I do not feel competent to answer this point. It remains true that Christ declared: “But I say unto you, love your enemies”—you are no better than the Gentiles if you only love those who love you. If the Christian precept involves much more it cannot mean any less than giving to human beings all that passion which some men give to abstract nouns and impersonal causes—it is the thing which used very properly to be called “zeal for souls”. It is a passion for men as ends in themselves; and indeed love too must be regarded as

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a blossom that blooms for its own sake, not as the mere means to some utilitarian end. Though life confronts us with grave dilemmas and there seems to be need at times for great militancy, so that even on occasion it seems necessary to treat men with great violence, yet these terrible necessities do not abrogate the law of love—they merely multiply the number of the factors that it has to take into consideration. Even if we have to fight men we are not permitted to hate them or to forsake compassion; and this is the distinction which is capable of making a real difference to our conduct at pivotal moments in human conflicts. In any case there is too much violence in a world where the self-righteous so often seem to be without compassion. St. John was right if it was he who in his old age went dotingly about the world, and when he met people in the flame of setting suns would put his hands on their heads saying only: "Brethren, love one another".

Even so, there are grades and forms of human affection, and we know that evil can come about if men love anything in the world too much—their country or their family, their college or their religious denomination, their art or their science, and even the cause of civilisation as they may happen to conceive it. We may say that we can rectify such aberrations by taking care that in the world we will love nothing save human beings. We may decide to act (as I believe we ought to do), and to carry out all our thinking, on the basis that within the limits of the terrestrial order nothing but live human beings really exists—human beings who get badly hurt sometimes and can become terribly knotted and gnarled,

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terribly warped through being so hurt. Still even within the terms of this situation a parent can love a child too much or a man love a woman ; and even love between human beings may become a disproportioned thing, or may turn sour and egotistical. Such cases make it clear that the love is not always of the right sort or quality ; as in the case of the parent who does not love the child in the separateness of its personality or seek to coax it into greater autonomy ; or the case of that love which becomes twisted and warped through fear, the fear, for example, that it is not going to be returned. It is at this point of the argument that we see how the question is one far above that of the mere natural affections, and that what is at issue is a higher regulative kind of love which holds dominion over our natural affections themselves and secures that everything shall be in due proportion. It is in rising to this view that we come to have a perception of a kind of love which is to be achieved only by virtue of man's spiritual nature, and by the realisation of a higher view of personality itself. In New Testament Love the reality of the spiritual realm is installing itself here and manifesting itself now ; indeed this is the point where spiritual and temporal most demonstrably intersect. It makes a difference to the visible character of life on the earth. This Love as seen in the saints ought to be regarded as one of the evidences for Christianity.

At this point, therefore, the spiritual and the ethical idea have become one and the result issues in forms of life that are enacted and experienced here and now. If to the scholar the intellectual order of existence is much

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higher than the animal or the mechanical, so in the biographies of the saints there is a spiritual life superimposed upon the others, and this carries personality to still a higher altitude. There have always been men who, though unlettered and unlearned, made it apparent that they had reached these more rarefied realms—there have always been ignorant men who have been profound even in their “falling in love”. The idea of love then is far away above the realm of secular ideals like justice or of the utilitarian virtues, such as honesty and thrift; and belongs to the realm of things like prayer and worship, which are both means and ends or are ends in themselves—not owing their virtue to any displacements or rearrangements which they may be calculated to produce in the world of things. The whole doctrine of love stands precarious and impoverished unless we are prepared to carry it to that higher plane of New Testament teaching where Love is a religious idea. Its place is in the realm of the theological virtues like mercy and humility which in a certain sense are its fruit.

Furthermore it is by loving God first that men find their true direction; for it is only this that puts the rest of our loves into proper proportion. Tremendous tragedy comes on the world because men love one thing too much, or they love it more than they love human beings, or they love some human beings too exclusively, or they give themselves up to false gods of one kind or another in the world. So they will be cruel to their fellows for the sake of a cause, or they will become diseased in their fallings-in-love, or family

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affections will turn to tyranny and selfishness. For this reason, it is well to have one's eye on a distant star rather than on any landmark on the earth's surface. If God is like the great counter-magnet, pulling against the world, all our other desires and fervours and attachments will be richer and will find their proper place.

But under God this Love has no object save human personalities; indeed, as we have seen, we are in a realm where only personality really exists. Not things or abstract nouns or other causes can ever be the end; and it does not matter if the abstract noun is "righteousness" itself; for in the terrestrial realm Christianity knows no righteousness save this zeal for human souls. Actual live human beings are to be taken as the values in the world because they are souls meant for eternity. It is the end of the hunt for values—for abstract values that are supposed to matter more than human souls. No other ethic can preserve the high valuation of human personality; no other ethic can escape either subordinating people to something else or weakly stating that each human being lives for himself alone. No other ethic can unite human beings in societies by a process which—as in the case of Love—is itself an actual heightening of personality. It is not meaningless but it is a real safeguard to say, then, that human beings exist for the glory of God. And it is no mere sentimentality but an essential piece of strategy to say that the sum of the whole is Love, which sum is God Himself.

III

One of the great themes which are examined and gradually developed in the Bible—the ancient Hebrews beginning to learn their lesson in quite a small way, and then trying their feet out in slightly deeper water, until finally they came to be submerged by the magnificence of the whole subject—is the question of the nature of Love. If one takes a survey of the subject throughout the Scriptures as a whole, it is as though a person were trying out some musical instrument—a great organ, shall we say—and moving the hands very timidly over the keyboard at first, and then experimenting a little more boldly with this new stop and that, gradually discovering deeper and more mighty things about the instrument, until the whole range of it is revealed, and the organ becomes a vast universe of sound with all the richness of an orchestra. Even in Old Testament days, when sometimes we must feel that the story has so much of battle and thunder, a note of unforgettable gentleness will appear on occasion, and we can hardly fail to be moved by the music of some tender remark about God's love for His people. In the prophetic period itself, when God's judgment came so terribly upon the land of Israel, and the country was overrun by the enemy, and Jerusalem itself was razed to the ground—even in that tragic epoch the ancient Jews seemed to become more conscious than before that God was tugging at their heart-strings: "Yea, I have loved

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thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee". It is a remarkable fact that men learned about the nature of this thing called Love by the very process of penetrating more profoundly into the nature of God Himself. Here are two ideas that grew together and grew into one another, enriching and reinforcing one another at every step of the way. Even in the Old Testament there emerged indeed the picture or the pattern that does so much to transform one's appropriation of the whole human drama—the picture of God presiding over this world of tumult and violence, of cupidity and fear, of struggle and cross-purposes—presiding over it and drawing upon it like a magnet, drawing men by the cords of Love. Bitter suffering and unspeakable tragedies, great groanings of spirit and repeated wrestlings with truth were visibly bringing religious thinkers to this truth. In the life of Christ the story reaches its climax in that revelation which carries the greatest certainty of all, though of all it is the most unfathomable—the revelation that God Himself is Love. Of all revelations this is the one which seems to bring us closest to the heart of things and the centre of ultimate mystery. Here we can feel that we have the key which would unlock the whole secret of the universe if only there were not some little thing which we have just forgotten and which would tell us how to turn it.

And in the development of this whole theme through the Bible there emerges gradually but ever more clearly the thesis which throws a more remarkable light upon the nature of history, perhaps, than any other—a thesis

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concerning the actual power of Love. It stands at the heart of the greatest problems with which the ancient Hebrews had to wrestle and in the course of the Scriptures it makes its development with the majesty of an orchestral theme. By the very method of taking catastrophe at its most malevolent, by watching evil reach its greatest arrogance, by seeing history at its worst, the men of religious insight came to rock bottom and discovered what it was that remained undefeatable and what it was that could still be done even in a world where the darkness seemed complete. In the picture of the Suffering Servant we see Israel suffering for all mankind; but when the Gentiles shall hear of it and realise the truth, the very knowledge of what has happened shall move them—the very spectacle will be a thing to move the nations to penitence. In the life of Christ it is the very defeat that brings the victory, and the very powerlessness that is the source of power.

Here is the last safety-valve that Providence offers within human history itself, when the forces of evil seem to have sealed up the outlet to any other hope. When power is at its most implacable and self-righteousness is at its stiffest there is an extreme point where only Love can still fight and it can only fight with the weapons of non-resistance. If the might of brutal dictatorships were ever to reach the most terrible degree that the imagination has conjectured, if totalitarian systems clamped themselves down upon the whole human race, this would be the only hope left; but, after whatever delays and sufferings, sooner or later the same magic would come into operation again, provided Christians

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were faithful. The hearts of men are not everywhere so irredeemably bad that the spectacle of suffering love would not melt human nature and touch it at an effectual point somewhere, sometime. In a similar way when all else failed, the early Christians always had the weapon of martyrdom to make them invincible. Somewhere there is a callousness that becomes unfrozen by the challenge of so much Love coming into the world only to meet with Crucifixion. Somewhere the challenge operates to undermine our apparent righteousnesses and to tear the mask that had hidden us from ourselves. The love for the undeserving, the love that operates on us irrespective of our deserts—that redundancy and superfluity of Love—is stronger in its hold upon a man who has awakened to it than the fear of hell could ever be. Heaven does not guarantee that the prowess of the good men shall prevail; but it has shown us that out of their very defeat there can come a greater victory. Even from the success of evil at its worst it appears that Providence can manufacture a still higher good. In this sense the Crucifixion itself carries us to the last truth concerning the nature of history.

It is even true that in the last resort the same fundamental ideas must determine what it is that Christians want to do with the world as well as defining the only thing left for them to do in the worst eventualities. The role of Christianity in history has been most impressive when it has followed this pattern—not when it has been self-righteous or denunciatory but when it has been patiently drawing men with cords of love, and has sought no power except that which comes from its

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very powerlessness. Where Christian wisdom has most excelled all kinds of wordly wisdom even in the conduct of mundane affairs has been in the cases where it has relied on love, and that perhaps is why the lives of saints seem more efficacious in history than the decrees and the pontifical judgments of ecclesiastics.

The fundamental rule of Christian conduct is clear, though it is surprising in some respects, and it strikes many people as paradoxical. We might say that the mind does not take naturally to it at first—indeed it would appear that Christians themselves are too little inclined to it if they have forms of material power upon which they can rely instead. The rule is that we should judge all men to be sinners but treat all men as born for eternity. We are to love all men in spite of the fact that they are sinners, partly because we know that we are sinners ourselves. We are to love them even when they go on sinning—for otherwise how could Christ have loved us? We are to love them even if we have to fight them—we have to love our enemies and never treat them as subhuman or as children of the devil, even if they treat others so; for otherwise how would mankind ever be lifted above barbarism? Much depends on what we are trying to do with the world and for the Christian it is not sufficient just to beat the sinner and conquer him or score over him—the object is to win him from his sins. Even if we have to fight him we do not give up that hope, do not even cease to be sorry for him somewhere or other—do not fight as the pagans do, with an idea that the sinners can be destroyed or that they can be rendered incapable of sinning any

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more. Therefore, let the non-Christians rise as hot and angry and Pharisaical as they like—which after all is the essence of much of our modern barbarism—but the Christian, though he must be greatly distressed, has no right to be angry or surprised or Pharisaical when confronted by the spectacle of human wilfulness and even cruelty. The Christian understands it better than anybody else does—understands it as one who feels himself a partner in man's universal sin. For the Christians are not the righteous—they are the ones who confess themselves to be sinners. And they have a safety-valve against certain kinds of hardness of heart by that fact.

One of the things which we have to understand is that, under certain conditions, human beings in great masses—human beings in their millions—do become barbarian; just as in a panic when a building is on fire they may do things which they never would have done in the security of normal life. In the same way we have to confess to ourselves that certain conditions may be conducive to drunkenness and certain other conditions may bring about an epidemic of juvenile crime. Human beings are creatures liable to become terribly hurt by life, and it is possible for them to be badly twisted as a result. And sometimes fear may make great numbers of them unbelievably cruel—few people realise how completely the shadow of a haunting dread may drive compassion from men's hearts. Alternatively when men are driven to desperation they can do very ugly things indeed—even men who in normal circumstances would have cut a respectable figure in the world. And

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we ourselves may be co-responsible to a greater or less degree if we have been the ones to force them into that predicament. It is in a real and concrete sense, therefore, that we may be responsible for one another's sins. Men can become blindly wilful and passionate if they have the feeling that they are the victims of great injustice and that there is nobody who will try to understand. In the last thirty or forty years we have seen terrible examples of this ; and what a fine thing it would have been if such people could have said that, though nobody else understood, still the Christian could be counted upon to do so. Even if a person or a State has been allowed to achieve too much power in any part of the world, without effective local check, so that it is in a position to know to what a degree it can make any movement it likes with virtual impunity—here is a condition of things which carries temptations such as human beings are hardly ever known to have been able to resist. Above all we can learn from history the grim truth that nations take to aggression in turn—the evil is not inherent in the disposition of a given people. In fact we can see that successive nations have been branded in this respect as the perpetual aggressors, the eternal enemies of mankind. We have never quite examined what the conditions are which make now one nation and now another so great a menace to its neighbours. But we know that where men have not reached those heights at which they are superior to conditions—where imperfect lumps of human nature like ourselves are concerned—certain factors and combinations of circumstance do in fact produce aggressive nationalism.

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All these aspects of the operation of necessity and conditioning circumstance in human history present the wide field that is open to Christian charity; and the call for this is the greater since they represent the field in which men so often show no pity for one another. They explain why it is proper for us—it is even a kindness to the potential culprits—to organise ourselves in an effective way against the faults of human nature; it is a virtue to lock our doors and take care that our valuables are protected, because otherwise we are liable to turn some people into thieves who had never thought of such a thing, so that we ourselves are responsible for the increase of theft. And it is better to see that human nature is guarded against itself in this way than that we should be careless of our property at the first stage of the argument only to become utterly compassionless at the finish towards the thieves we have helped to make. If this is true, however, it is equally true that we should take similar precautions against the emergence of a potential aggressor in the international field; and if we have omitted to do so, by refusing to arm ourselves, then we have helped to create the very evil of which we complain. We cannot mend the situation by treating the aggressor as subhuman afterwards or by trying to drive moral indignation to a higher power.

In other words there is a fallaciously “moralistic” attitude that we can take when we are dealing with the various problems of human relations. If theft or juvenile delinquency or military aggression seem worse now than in other periods, we may take refuge in moral indignation but in reality we may only be evading the

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reproach to which we ourselves are liable. We can say that thieves, juveniles and aggressors are more wicked now than in other ages, when we ought to be asking which of the safeguards against these things we have allowed to disappear. The Pharisees who adopt this facile course sometimes even pretend to be more moral than other people. It is somewhat as if a person were to claim that theft should be punished by hanging, and, when challenged on the subject, attempted to take credit for going further in this way than other people in the fight against human wickedness.

Even if we may have to defend ourselves against an enemy, then, Christianity does not allow us to hate the enemy or to imitate his barbarities on the pretext of moral indignation; and if to our pity and sorrow we add hatred, we need to take care lest we merely enlarge the area of the evil, even if only by barbarising ourselves. The fight against modern barbarism is peculiar and difficult; for the means we must take to defend ourselves against it are precisely the opposite means to the ones which would be needed for exercising a civilising influence. In any case it is a question whether we do not bring tragedy for the world when we allow our purposes to go much further than merely defending the victims of attack—it is a question whether we have made the world a safer place for smaller nations by our modern species of “defensive war with an offensive *arrière-pensée*”. Until our time, when so much history was reorganised for popular consumption on the basis of a pagan righteousness-myth, historical science did not make any mistake about the matter. After 1688 the

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victorious Whigs claimed the right to treat the Tories in the way that the Tories in their previous triumph had treated them ; and from a certain point of view they could feel justified in this, their demand for severities being prompted by moral indignation. On these lines, however, the politics of scandal and melodrama might have continued for ever, each party only conscious that it was punishing the crimes of the other as it acquired, in turn, the power to be vindictive. We might wonder how the world can ever escape from a vicious circle of this peculiar kind, since even indignation against the barbarities of the enemy tended to make both parties more barbarous themselves. William III was right, after the Revolution of 1688, to insist on what we might almost call forgiveness of sins. The only way out of the vicious circle is for one of the parties in the moment of victory to forgo the dangerous pleasures of vindictive justice even in conditions where it feels authorised to be vindictive.

IV

The Christian attitude to the whole question of righteousness and of human conduct, therefore, is not the same as that which is so generally current in the world. And in the discussion of its claims it is irrelevant if Christians are reproached for a failure to attain the ideal they preach ; since by the definition of the case they agree that they are worthy of judgment in the light of that particular standard—in other words, they have to confess

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their inadequacies all the more. That is only to say that Christians must stand under the perpetual reproach of not being in this respect Christian enough. In spite of this it is doubtful whether many would deny that they have seen the results of the Christian doctrine of Love in the lives of saints at one period or another. And in a Christian civilisation even approximations to the view have had a great function to perform; as in the case of many maxims which once took the edge off human conflicts because they repudiated the primeval thesis: "We are the righteous ones and the enemy are the wicked". It is true, however, that when certain elements of the Christian view are combined with certain of the pagan the result may be a more high-powered mischief than either of the attitudes when taken separately; the corruption of the best becomes worse than anything else. It is true also that in Christianity as in Judaism one of the greatest dangers, as we have seen, is the reversion to legalism and to what we call Pharisaism. But these things spring from man's nature and need no Church to foster them; as the portentous character of modern political Pharisaism shows.

The hardest thing of all is to convict the self-righteous of the errors of their ways, especially those who find it so comfortable to believe that they are the good people arrayed against the evil ones of history. It was more easy for Christ to deal with the known disreputables, the publicans and sinners, than to alter the Pharisees, the reputable people, who thought that they kept all the righteousnesses but were convicted of not having sufficient love. One of the most solemn facts in all

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history—one of the most significant for anybody who cares to ponder over it—is the fact that Jesus Christ was not merely murdered by hooligans in a country road; He was condemned by everything that was most respectable in that day, everything that pretended to be most righteous—the religious leaders of the time, the authority of the Roman government, and even the democracy itself which shouted to save Barabbas rather than Christ. We cannot really say: “See what awful gangsters these people were”. We have rather to say: “See the terrible things that this kind of righteousness leads to”. In a profound sense we may say that the Crucifixion, however else we may interpret it, accuses human nature, accuses all of us, in the very things that we think are our righteousnesses. If we followed the twentieth-century forms of moralising, which have run so quickly to the national sort, we might imagine that the Jews of the time of Christ were particularly bad sinners, worse than the rest of human nature. Our attitude to the Crucifixion must be that of self-identification with the rest of human nature—we must say “*We* did it”; and the inability to adopt something of the same attitude in the case of twentieth-century events has caused our phenomenal failure to deal with the problem of evil in our time. So the Crucifixion challenges the prestige and power of the Pharisaical notion of upright living, challenges the old Roman respectabilities, and supersedes the pre-Christian notion of a righteous man. In the light of it the claim that “*our* conscience is clear” is the ugliest pretence of all. Indeed, if we call to mind that high-and-mighty kind of righteous-

ness which congeals into moral rectitude and seems to close up the windows of the soul and sometimes makes good men so intolerable—in all of the world's literature there is no place where it is attacked more persistently and more profoundly than in the Bible.

The alternative that is put before us is what might be called a positive kind of righteousness, in contrast with the kind which merely avoids breaking the Commandments. We might even call it a creative kind, since it cannot be exhausted by carrying out existing formulas—love is presumed to be ever inventing or discovering new things to do. On this system men are not merely “good” or “bad,” though they may be more or less lacking in love and in the richness of their natures. Just as Galileo transforms natural science by refusing to say that some bodies had gravity and others a corresponding levity—just as all the bearings of a problem are changed when we say that bodies merely differ from one another in weight—so in the moral world all our mathematical calculations are altered when we realise that human beings differ in degree rather than in kind—the error is to talk of “good” on the one side and “bad” on the other. And we ought to be prepared to see that nations and civilisations may fall not because of one man's criminality but because of the smaller betrayals and shortcomings of masses of respectable people. The positive and creative kind of righteousness can be redefined in a further sense; for it is the morality of those who see life as a mission and who know that there is something to be done with this pathetic world. Even in the

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worst of tragedies Christianity leaves life with some meaning, for it guarantees to men a mission.

It is fundamental to the teaching of the New Testament that we are to take something of the divine into human life in order to transform that life. Something that men only learned by thinking about God is to be added as a new factor, a new force, in the field of human existence. It is all very well for man to ape the Almighty provided he does not pretend to ape the power or the knowledge or the regal position, but catches by contagion some of the love and mercy. In any case, it is the Love that lies in the nature of God which comes first; and we love only because He first loved us. The development of the ideas which we have been considering is a development that has taken place in religious history. Those who gave at times great evidence of Christian Love were like men who felt that they had had a hairbreadth escape, so that whatever they possessed seemed more than they had a right to. They were like the man who sees himself as having been gratuitously reprieved; or like the man who having lived through two world-wars with undeserved immunity might feel his life henceforward not quite his own, not anything that he had a right to, not anything that he could use for its own sake. Men of all kinds are capable of extraordinary self-sacrifice; even superstition has had devotees willing to immolate themselves; even Nazi youths could die for comrades or for the Fatherland. In Christianity a wider notion of Love as manifested in God Himself sets the tone for the whole wide outlook of men, and decides what they are trying

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to do with the world. Those who have seen their Salvation are in a position to unload themselves of the fears which are the most constricting of the enemies of love. These very men would goad a rightly indignant world by their priggishness and Pharisaism if they did not at the very start actually feel the sins of even Nazis and Communists as their own. If they get anywhere at all with such an undertaking it would have to be by the power of the Love that had first been bestowed on them.

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I

THE genesis of historical events lies in human beings. The real birth of ideas takes place in human brains. The real reason why things happen is that human beings have vitality. From the historian's point of view it is this that makes the world go round. If we take all the individuals of France at a given moment in 1789, they represent what in one respect can be regarded as so many separate wells of life, so many sources of decision and action. And it is the bustling activity of these people, the thoughts of their brains, their desires and self-assertiveness, their constant adjustments to situations, that produce the events and interactions which we call the French Revolution. What we find are human beings living their lives as we are doing, and if we label the results of their escapades and activities with some such term as the French Revolution, and then go on to think of this French Revolution as a "thing" with its causes and results—above all, if we

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start imagining that the French Revolution stood up and did something as though it were a self-acting agent (when we really mean that a certain man or group of men came to some decision or other)—then we are moving into that world of optical illusions in which historians play such clever conjuring-tricks for the purpose of mystifying themselves. Economic factors, financial situations, wars, political crises do not cause anything, do not do anything, do not exist except as abstract terms and convenient pieces of shorthand. In the last resort, if we want to see the bursting of the South Sea Bubble we do not apprehend it as a mishap to a bubble or a strange eruption within the bosom of an abstract noun; what we get is a picture of human beings behaving in a certain way under certain conditions. It is necessary to stress this fact in a manner that may seem childish, because in Marx himself, and indeed in every so-called interpretation of history, this fundamental importance of human beings—this initial appearance of sovereignty in self-acting individuals—is, so to speak, taken as granted. It is men who make history—who really do things. All interpretations of history must be construed in the light of this fact.

For this reason all attempts to simplify explanations and turn history into schematic patterns are limited in their validity and are periodically liable to crack. Constantly such systems must be thrown back into the melting-pot; and for the purpose of recovering authentic contact with the past, we must return to the jungle of details and complexities—return to the elasticity of ordinary narrative history. In the last resort,

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the student of the past is dealing with nothing less than the irrepressibility of human beings and the unsleeping flow of life itself.

But this action of individual people is not really sovereign action, and precisely the study of history makes us see how highly it is conditioned. The men who composed the France of 1789 were not autonomous god-like creatures acting in a world of unconditioned freedom; and even their waywardnesses were not really waywardness. The very situations to which they had to adjust themselves day by day were the product of history—not the deposit of one particular stream of events, not the imaginable result of one selected line of causes—but things which required nothing less than the whole of previous history for their explanation. Besides the truism that human beings are the real makers of history there is the truism that all the past is necessary for the historical explanation of all the present; and all interpretations of history are misleading us if we imagine that they can short-circuit this thesis or give us an easy unravelling of the intricate network of interactions that history presents. And not only the situations they had to meet but the men of 1789 themselves were very much the products of history; the mentality that each brought to the situation, the ideas they possessed, their modes of reasoning, their unconscious assumptions, the very language in which they did their thinking were things which the historian would only explain by examining antecedents.

For men who work upon history are themselves partly moulded by it in the first place, conditioned by

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it even at the moment when they imagine themselves most free, most masterly in their action upon it. Men make history, it is true, they do not merely sit and suffer it ; but there is a sense in which they are to some degree products of history in the first place—not only they themselves, but the situations they have to face, the problems they have to meet, the world in which they live, are the accumulated product of centuries of the past. So we can say that there is an historical process which, though not self-existing and self-acting, operates at any given moment, conditioning men and yet perpetually conditioned by them. Human beings are the agents of that process ; the process only goes on because human beings have brains and vitality ; but the process, working on the stuff of human nature, helps to shape men before men shape it, and we are all victims as well as agents of the historical process.

Now the technical historian, in those moments when he is not merely describing but is trying to explain the past, studies human action precisely in this latter aspect, that is to say as “conditioned” action. He does not first study men as sovereign shapers of their own personalities and lives—acting in the free air—but as creatures who themselves are shaped by the history that has happened before, creatures who therefore are subject to necessity. The moralist studies human conduct from a different point of view altogether. The moralist is concerned with secret motives, with the question of final responsibility ; he pretends to judge Charles I in his aspect as a free agent, who might and ought to have acted differently—so he needs an absolute knowledge of

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the inside of Charles I's mind. The technical historian rather tries to see how far he can understand why Charles I acted as he did—seeks to gain understanding by putting the man in his age, viewing him in his proper context, examining his education, his environment, and his place in the historical process—generally aspiring therefore to discover how his action was historically conditioned. The historian, in so far as he moves from narrative to explanation, is the student of that necessity which conditions—though we must never say that it totally determines—human action. Therefore he has to begin by seeing Charles I, so to speak, entangled in a whole network of historical necessity; remembering, however, that Charles is not an inanimate object, he is a real live man entangled in the network, so that his actions can never be quite predictable.

There is then a certain system of necessity in which human beings at any place and period are not imprisoned but more or less involved. In the somewhat technical sense in which we are now considering it, an interpretation of history must be regarded as a thesis concerning the organisation of that whole system of necessity. Of course an Englishman, by great endeavour, might acquire the art of thinking in French, and even the son of a duke, if he has great imaginative sympathy, might admirably portray in a work of fiction something of the outlook of a coal-miner. In other words, people are not entirely fastened and fixed within the limits that have helped to shape their minds. There exist some conditioning circumstances, however, which seem to be particularly hard and inescapable. Marxism and the

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various economic interpretations of the past would regard some of the economic factors in history as belonging to this class.

It is necessary for us to have these preliminary points before our eyes in order to obtain the framework of ideas, or in order to enter the particular intellectual realm, in which Marxian history has any relevance for us—the realm in which we can meet it on what I might call discussing terms. At this stage, however, we can say that there are certain things which we can and must demand from anything that claims to be an interpretation of history—there are certain conditions that must be satisfied. First of all, no interpretation of history can get away from the fact that it is men who make history, it is men's brains that produce ideas. Secondly, we must always bear in mind that nothing less than the whole of the past is necessary to explain the whole of the present—it can never be true to say that merely economic causes can account for the golden age of Spanish civilisation, for example. Thirdly, a so-called interpretation of history (in the sense in which we are now considering it) is really a comment on the historical process, and on that system of historical necessity which conditions human activity at any given moment—it is really a commentary on the structure of the providential order and the ways of Providence. On this view a person can hold an economic interpretation of history without in any sense denying the existence of a spiritual element in life; for the interpretation is to be regarded rather as a thesis concerning the kind of universe in which the spirit has to work. We should make a

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mistake if we treated it as either the equivalent or the substitute for what we might call "prophecy"—the final teaching on the subject of man and his destiny, the ultimate revelation of the meaning of life on the earth. An economic interpretation of history (in so far as it is valid at all) must not be supposed to bear the implication that man can live by bread alone; on the contrary it carries rather the implication that in the historical realm at least man, however spiritual he may be, cannot live without bread. Such an interpretation, furthermore, can never go so far as to deny the power of ideas in life—it must stand rather as a thesis concerning those factors which condition the origin, the development and the currency even of ideas. Given that men have brains, certain things set limits to the operation of the intellect. An economic interpretation of history says that some economic factors set inescapable limits, though they can hardly be regarded as setting the whole of these. The Marxist interpretation or method should be envisaged in the same light.

When it comes to the question of historical interpretation people may have all the evidence before them and may get the externals of the story correct, and yet may go astray by putting the story, so to speak, in the wrong universe. It is one of our optical illusions, for example, to imagine Philip II of Spain more free than he really was, just as we fail to realise how our thinking must be conditioned through having to be done under the limitations of the English language. We fail to see how Philip II was limited by his world and hemmed in by all kinds of forces and conditioning circumstances;

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and we dismiss him with facile condemnation because we imagine that the universe in which he lived was freer than it really was—indeed, we constantly imagine that the range of options open to a statesman at a given moment is greater than in reality turns out to be the case. Because of all this, we often exaggerate the importance in the purely historical realm of what too easily appears to be thorough goodness or thorough badness in single human beings; we over-dramatise our history; we attribute too little to the historical process.

And just as we impute too much to individuals in our analysis of historical change, so we tend to attribute too much to ideas as though ideas were independent powers in history, existing outside men. People have pretended to account for the decline of tribal society by simply saying that there was a decline of the tribal idea or there was a diminution of the sense of kinship. I have seen the decay of the feudal system attributed in a similar way to the decline of what is called the feudal idea. Some historians have believed in the policy of using ideas to explain history, as though ideas were not in some sense the result of history before they could start being the cause of anything. There would be more point in adopting the reverse attitude and saying that we bring all the history that we know to help to explain ideas and changes in ideas. Those who attribute so much to personalities and ideas without remembering how greatly these are themselves the product of history are putting the whole story into the wrong universe, into an intellectualist's paradise, an academic utopia—

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they do not realise the play of forces in the world, or the importance of the historical process. I think they do not grasp the way in which things really happen in the historical realm; they do not realise that the events which it is their task to examine are affected by the fact that they take place in a gravitational field. Every personality in history represents much more than the tangible evidence can ever account for; but this does not alter the fact that the historian must assemble around each human being all the explanation he can gather by the study of antecedents and attendant circumstances.

I do not think that we need be too apprehensive, therefore, of what is sometimes called a "materialist" interpretation of the processes which take place in history. Indeed, it would almost be better to go one step further and prevent misunderstanding by reversing the phraseology—admitting that the technical study of the past is in any case concerned with a limited and concrete explanation of the human drama, since it looks for the earthly or mundane things, it looks for the things which can be discovered by its peculiar kind of apparatus and attested to all men (whatever their philosophy) by the tangible evidence. Technical history *is* the materialist interpretation of the past—reached by the process of assembling round an event the things which can be collected in a certain kind of fishing-net, and which are capable of being fastened down. The Christian in particular should not be frightened too quickly, for there is in the Christian tradition a healthy regard for the material world, compared with which some of our modern liberals have seemed to savour of Manichaeism.

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It is well that we should have a great respect for something that is unanswerable and inescapable in some of the grim conditioning factors in life—well that we should realise and study the operation of hard necessity in the world, and should regard this as being itself part of the Providential order. I would not say anything against the sublimity of pure intellect, the majesty of mind. But I cannot forget that so far as the historian's universe is concerned any light there may be in my eyes could be put out by a few blows on the head with a hammer. Even cooped up in something like Hitlerite Germany I might be confident that I could still find things for the mind to think about ; and secretly at dead of night I might let my thoughts go where they liked and count myself king of infinite space. But this itself would have to be on the condition that I were not starved to death or flogged out of my wits.

The first inescapable condition ~~that we must have~~ before we can possess any history at all is that people should be able physically to live—should not be wiped out by starvation. Before they can have continuous intellectual life of any high order it is possibly necessary that they should not even live in constant unmitigated fear of starvation. Before they can have metaphysics, experimental science, or the rationalistic outlook it might even be necessary that means of production should have reached a certain level and facilitated a division of labour and complicated the social structure and made possible certain kinds of technique. One need not for a moment forget that ideas are important in history, important as conditioning factors too. Ideas can even

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freeze in our minds and become almost as hard and inescapable as material necessity. Our intellectual development and the progress of civilisation may be hindered perhaps by some ideas that have become obsessions in our minds. But supposing we go to the study of history for the sake of ideas themselves, and we prize these most ; supposing our real end and aim in the study of history is the examination of the story and fate and vicissitudes of ideas ; supposing the thing we are concerned with is just the history of ideas, still these things do not remain disembodied when the historian begins to handle them ; we shall soon find that we are not studying the pure logical development of ideas so to speak in the air ; there is no form of history more fallacious than that which is obtained by the merely literary study of ideas. It is necessary to bring all these things down to earth and see what factors were conditioning and deflecting the movements of the human mind itself. I should be prepared to listen to the case that if one goes deep enough in one's analysis of historical change or far enough back in one's pursuit of the whole question into the past, one may be brought up against some source of specially significant change due to an alteration in an economic conditioning factor. Even so, we must never forget our original thesis—that it is men who have minds ; and the minds (as Dickens shows so remarkably in the case of some of his minor characters) may be limited in specific ways and yet may operate with extraordinary vividness and ingenuity within whatever limiting terms have been set for them. We must never forget what the human mind

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can do with its limited materials, even when bounded by a nutshell.

Whether we are studying the great transition from the medieval religious civilisation to the modern secular state, or we are examining the Industrial Revolution which within the course of one century in particular did so much to transform the conditions of human life, whether we are tracing the growth of modern science or the rise of modern democracy we should not nowadays be satisfied to observe the surface-drama of events ; we should not be content to give a mere literary narrative of personalities in conflict ; above all we should not generally make a picture of good men fighting bad men, enlightened men fighting obscurantists, and feel that our minds could rest if we merely left the matter there. Subjects like these are to be envisaged within the framework of much larger social processes ; and the effect of the analysis of these can be seen even when the historian thinks that he is only narrating. Since Marx's time historians indeed have been coming over more and more to this basic point of view—sometimes in spite of themselves, sometimes without confessing that the influence of Marx had anything to do with the case, sometimes, also, no doubt, without even realising that any change was taking place.

The Marxists—though they cannot pretend that the discovery was actually theirs—have taught the world what many historians in fact have come to feel, namely, that history does not proceed by a logical development, by the kind of progress which may be presumed to take place, every step in order, along a straight line. Movement

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occurs rather because of the issues that perpetually arise within a given society ; the issues lead to conflict between the parts of the society ; until the conflict itself brings men to the production of what is really a new thing. Something emerges to put an end to the struggle, something which rises above the conflicting parties ; and in the long run the older parties are superseded by the emergence of a new world which may embrace or transcend both. In other words, thesis fights antithesis, until there is achieved what is called the synthesis. If we are disposed to find fault with a formula of this kind, at any rate this particular one is capable of supreme elasticity, and it checks the unconscious operation of another one which has done much harm in the past. Those who do not hold it seem unconsciously to fall into mental habits which on many occasions have been less satisfactory in their effects. For a long time the world was content to think of what we might call a linear development in history—to say that Protestantism led to toleration and to imagine that it was characteristic therefore of early Protestantism to be tolerant. Those who prefer to observe that the conflict of authorities, the struggle between Protestant and Catholic, was the thing which led to religious liberty are saved from some of the dangers of such a view and have a pattern of the historical process which is at any rate one stage better. In particular they have greater elasticity in their conception of history, for they see two intolerant bodies producing by their conflict something different from either—something not deducible from either—and their minds are prepared for a kind of

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history that constantly surprises one with new things. The Marxists, therefore, though they did not invent it, have appropriated a formula which enables them to arrive at the real complexity of history a little sooner than those who follow unconsciously a more directly linear view of historical development. Readers of history in this country often fall unawares into heresies more serious than those of the Marxist at any rate in this respect.

Of the conflicts or the tensions that exist in any given society at any moment, the Marxists would maintain that there is something particularly significant in the tension between social classes. Once again they are not the discoverers of the idea, which has ancient antecedents; but they are responsible for much of the currency which has come to be given to it in modern historiography. It is difficult to deny the general thesis; for when we study the narrative of cities or nations, when we analyse the Reformation conflicts or the history of the institution of monarchy, when we examine even great transitions in intellectual history, we can hardly avoid being impressed by the evidence of its applicability. It would nowadays be a natural tendency in an historian, approaching an important episode in the past, to make clear to himself the general framework of the society in which the events were taking place. The chief contribution of the Marxists has been that they, more than anybody else, have taught us to make our history a structural piece of analysis—something which is capable of becoming more profound than a piece of ordinary political narrative. Instead of

stopping with a drama of personalities, Charles I fighting Cromwell for example, we move further to a kind of geological study, we try to see what was happening below the surface, we envisage the stresses and strains that take place in the structure of the whole country. Even ordinary political narrative is bound to be altered as a result of this kind of structural analysis; and a further range of territory is brought under tribute for the purpose of assisting us in the elucidation of the story. We do not need to be Marxists to confess that in reality Marx and Engels, in spite of the mass of faults in which their work is entangled, have done important service to the study of the historical process in modern times.

The Marxist would not only say that periods of intellectual change should be studied with reference to displacements or disturbances in the contemporary structure of society. He would argue that the disturbances and the structure might themselves be traced back, at any rate on a last analysis, to some economic conditioning circumstance. He makes what is sometimes a plausible case (though it is one which it must be very difficult to prove or disprove, especially as his system is capable of such elasticity), that an alteration in modes of production will be found to be the strategic factor in large-scale historical change, provided the enquirer pursues the question far enough, pursues it if necessary back to a remoter past. He often has in mind the larger transitions in world-history, and envisages a wide form of generalisation, which requires us to cast our eyes over long stretches of time; and in this way he would explain the differences between feudal society and the

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modern bourgeois world—differences which he sees running through the whole structure of the resulting civilisation. What may be true over long periods in the last resort becomes, however, a pitfall for those Marxists who lack the required elasticity, and apply the formula by a kind of rule of thumb to short-term changes and to the detailed happenings of a narrower world. There is a fallacy, furthermore, in any attempt to trace historical change back to some economic cause, or indeed to any other cause, which is presumed to operate “in the last resort”. In history things become so entangled with one another, forces and factors so intricately interwoven, that it is difficult to take even the first steps in the delicate work of their unravelling. When I look at the complicated network of history, when I put the microscope at any point in the story and observe the multiplicity of the interactions, I wonder how anybody can dare to say that he can put his finger on a given thread in the tangle and claim it as the “essential” one. It is hazardous to assert that one has reached the last irreducible factor or the truth that lies at the bottom of the well.

One could not accept without serious thought any view which seizes upon some particular thing in history and regards it as being on successive occasions the very starting-point of historical change. It is not inconceivable to me, however, that some economic factor or some very tangible material thing should stand as a kind of pivot on which the history of a civilisation turns; and in a general sense the Marxian view of history may give the academic student the healthy reminder that his

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story ought to hug the soil and be near to earth. Whereas it was long believed that Holland and Belgium were separated in the sixteenth century by reason of the separate "national" feeling in these two parts of the Low Countries, the view has gained much ground that a very concrete factor—the strategic importance of the river-mouths—is responsible for the division, since these rivers put limits to the Spanish reconquest of that region. Whether we accept this argument or not, there is a certain sanity in such an attention to the hard material factors in history; and the most dangerous heresy of all is the view which men have so often wished to hold—namely that Holland and Belgium existed as "souls" before their separate political existence had started, and the souls were hankering after separate bodies. Furthermore, though many Marxists seem to apply their formulas to history by a kind of rule-of-thumb (turning into rigidity even things which ought to be the very definition of elasticity), some of them—and particularly those who have defended the principles of Marxian history in theory—have shown an admirable if tantalising flexibility, realising that from the moment when they have brought their formulas to the actual facts of history they can only watch the historical process for ever complicating itself. Plekhanov wrote some sentences which ought to be taken as a parable by all the followers of this system :

If, for instance, the dance performed by Australian Blackfellows is a reproduction of the activities of the same tribesmen when engaged in collecting roots, we know where we are. . . . But a knowledge of the economic life

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of France in the eighteenth century will not explain to us the origin of the minuet.

, With regard to either an economic or a Marxian interpretation of history, it is not clear at first glance how far one ought to desire it, however—how far indeed one ought to desire anything that pretends in this particular way to offer an interpretation of the processes of history. Whether the system is a sort of philosophy that we bring to our history before we begin our enquiry, or we regard it as the distilled essence of what we conceive ourselves to have learned from all our study of history, there are objections to it; and I wonder if I am merely being foolish when I say it is better for the ordinary technical student not to philosophise but to do history, just historically to enquire. But I suppose it is true that mere evidence is useless to a person who is reading history altogether in the wrong universe. There is a right way and there is a wrong way of approaching history; there is a right feeling to have for historical events; there is a sensitiveness that one may have, a proper awareness of the character of the historical process. When Napoleon said that the nature of the weapons decides everything else in the art and organisation of war; when Parry showed how the nature of instruments conditioned a development in music at an important point; when Holland Rose described how men opened their minds quickly enough for the great voyages of discovery once the requisite nautical apparatus was at their service; when Virginia Woolf gave £500 a year and a room of one's own as a necessary condition for the production

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of literature—they may all of them have been wrong in their actual statements for anything I care, but I think they possessed what I mean by the right kind of feeling—as historians. They realised that the grandest flights of the human mind are conditioned by the nature of the material universe in which the intellect has to work. There may be no known limits to the potentialities of the human mind, but so long as no instrument exists except a tin-whistle only a limited kind of music will in fact be composed, only a limited kind of music will in fact be conceived. The writers I have just mentioned seem better to me, therefore, than those other people who at their worst talk as though the human mind just decided to arise and expand at the Renaissance. It is these latter people who are doing their history in the wrong universe and are not holding the story down to earth.

Taking the credit side of the balance, therefore, we may say that in a certain sense a materialist interpretation of history, precisely because it is so brown and earthy, provides us with a healthy and realistic approach to the past. It offers a corrective to that older view which evaded fundamental problems by seeing history as a field for the activity of disembodied ideas—ideas that were treated as irreducible, that is to say, as being the starting-point rather than the consequence of change. A corrective of this sort is perhaps particularly useful for counteracting the fallacies inherent in the structure of that history which the average Englishman holds in his head. And when history is envisaged as being “fastened to the earth” it can be a more fructifying

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thing—it reveals itself as having recognisable processes ; and we can see how the destinies of man are anchored to very tangible things. In other words, we learn about man by learning how he is conditioned ; and material conditions are no doubt reducible to law in some degree, whether the Marxist has properly formulated the laws or not.

If in this sense we give consideration to anything which purports to be an interpretation of history, however—an interpretation of the kind which claims to provide us in advance with a clue to the study of historical processes—it is a thing to be taken with refinement and subtlety and imagination, and it must never blind us to the complexity of the interactions that take place in history. Such an interpretation—including the Marxian attempt to invert what had been held by the “idealists”—has its place in so far as it gives us an inclination in the right direction when we come to the study of history. No interpretation of this kind could be justified if it pretended to answer the problems of historical enquiry in advance. In this sense a materialist interpretation is useful in so far as it is the definition of the right kind of feeling to have at the beginning of an enquiry, a hint as to the right end of the stick to pick up, a guide to the predisposition with which to approach an unimaginably complicated collection of data. It should be refined into a mere subtlety of feeling, an inclination in the right direction, a feeling for realities, a disposition to see the evidence when it is there. In the last resort it is a mere sense that everything in history is curiously fastened to the earth ; and this is the real

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truth that Marxism primarily points out to us, a truth which many people have overlooked. We may accept the idea of an interpretation of history as a thing which gives us our initial angle, but we must be careful not to have everything decided for us beforehand by such an interpretation. Let us take the hint, perhaps, and decide to keep close to earth ; but then let us just study history and go on with mere enquiry. Let us study history and see where the facts take us and find even delight in facts as such. And, when quarrels occur, let us go back again to our history—go back again and study it in still further detail.

II

All this, however, gives us only one side of the picture. When I look at the other side, I have to note that partly owing to crudities and perversions ; partly owing to an entanglement in ideas or prejudices which happened to be current when the system was being developed over a century ago ; partly owing to the humble character of many of the people who have followed and extended the system, and who fell into some of the pitfalls of self-taught history ; partly again owing to partisanship and polemical intention—in other words, to the fact that the system has been identified with a political cause ; and, finally, because its devotees have so often shown rigidity in respect of principles of their own which required supreme elasticity of mind—for all these reasons the men who have actually written Marxist

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history (though they have made contributions to the study and in addition have said many stimulating things) have tended to produce a kind of history and a type of historical universe with which we must quarrel very radically indeed. If they have been right in calling attention to features of the historical process which had been ignored or insufficiently appreciated, they have fallen into an error parallel to that of their predecessors—narrowing their vision, so that they had eyes only for certain things.

In a fundamental sense—in a sense which reaches far out beyond the mere question of historical method—the whole Marxian outlook takes materialism for granted and ties itself to a philosophy of materialism, just as the ideal of the classless society has come to be allied and entangled with atheism. The Marxist assumes that the concrete, material and tangible things with which the technical historian is concerned are sufficient to account for everything—in other words, that historical explanation can give us a total and self-sufficient explanation of the universe. To the Marxist, then, the materialism is everything and materialist history is a self-complete, self-explanatory system. It is not apparent that a person who rejected this view would necessarily be incapacitated from agreeing (on a different level of thought) with the Marxian explanation of the way in which the historical process—the mechanism of conditioning circumstance—actually works. The Marxian theses concerning the concrete processes of history might conceivably be held by people who did not share the general materialistic outlook of the Communists—

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they are theses concerning the world of observable events, and they might be accepted as part of the truth about human life and yet not the whole truth. The idea that we should be able to explain a thing if we could tell its history, the denial of God, and the adoption of a materialist interpretation of the whole universe, are not peculiar to Marxism; they would seem to have been taken by it from modern secular liberalism; and modern Communism clings to some of the features of the age in which the movement was born. To the Marxist it would be important that we should share the philosophical outlook of materialism, and not merely accept the economic diagnoses, for example—not merely accept the historical theses and methods. Perhaps the Marxists have never sufficiently appropriated the first fundamental principle of Marx and of all true historiography—namely, that it is men who in reality make history. In any case, those who concede that material circumstances have a great part in conditioning the men in question, need not believe that the whole nature of man is defined by that fact. The Marxist may be consistent in his philosophy, but he is going beyond the historical evidence when he turns the conditioning factors into independent causes and makes them a self-sufficient explanation of history and the universe.

The Marxist historical method—even its handling of the concrete and tangible things in history—becomes a danger, however, precisely to the person who already holds such an initial bias in favour of the materialistic outlook in general. Whatever validity there might

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be in some of the Marxian principles, we may say that such principles would be better for anybody than for an actual Marxist, most useful of all, perhaps (or at any rate the least harmful), for a secure Christian, proof against the charm of materialism in itself, yet anxious to keep in touch with the hard earth. This is the more true in that so many of the Marxists have given evidence of another kind of materialism, too—materialism in what might be called the purely popular sense of the word—writing history as though not greatly interested in the arts or the achievements of the human intellect or the higher features of personality. In other words, their historical universe and the history that they actually write show the effect of minds too intent upon the distribution of worldly goods, so that the highest things in civilisation are treated as though they were mere frills and luxuries. Behind this preoccupation with material ends it may be true that, at least on occasion, there lies what is really a charitable intent and a desire to secure something more like justice in the world; but in the final result it is difficult to resist the view that in current forms of Marxist historical writing there is a kind of materialism liable to be corrupting to the mind.

As an effect of all this we must quarrel radically with Marxism in the historical field itself, because, when it presents us with historical reconstructions, it shows itself too materialistic even in its view of the very nature of human beings. In a sense it has done great service by taking the mask from human nature, but here, once again, it corrects our faults and then falls too often into what might almost be described as the equal and opposite

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errors. This is often revealed in the crudity of its treatment of human motive—as though the followers of Marx were not sufficiently interested in human nature as such, not sufficiently aware of the universe that lies inside a personality. Economic self-interest becomes not merely a bias inside human beings, not merely a factor amongst the other factors in life, not merely a fundamental feature of history—all of which it certainly is—but the perpetual motor of men's activity and the standing subject of their mental calculations. The error is perhaps not inherent in the Marxian method as such, but it springs from what we popularly call materialism and shows that the Marxists, like the rest of us, are able to create pitfalls for themselves, so that they end by stumbling into their own traps.

At the same time, the actual processes of history are distorted through this error to a less degree than some people might imagine. If in real life a man is not interested in promoting his business, we may applaud his disposition, but his place in the story will be taken by people who do have the push; and it seems to me that the course of economic history will run on much the same. Also we must note that, in a certain peculiar sense, which some of the Marxists seem to realise, the operation of the economic factor in history must be regarded as covering a wider area than that of the economic motive as such. One of the necessary clues to the understanding of diplomatic history is the fact that a man in Paris and a man in Berlin can never quite see one another's point of view, however generous and understanding they may try to be. In a parallel manner

the Marxists are justified in the view that those who belong to different classes of society—even the ones who are charitable and well-intentioned—will be unable to escape a certain constriction of vision, due to the fact that they are observing events from the platform of their social class. Men may be more unselfish than the Marxists often allow, while still being less capable of escaping from the influence of their social class than the enemies of the Marxists generally realise. I personally think, for example, that if we took a vote in England to-day on the question of the place to be given to classics in our educational system, the vote would show the effect that a man's social class may have even on his valuations in regard to general culture.

One of the great weaknesses of young historical students at the present day is that they know so little of what goes on inside human beings. In times when religion was fashionable and men knew their Bibles by heart, they had one advantage in that by intensive self-examination they learned about the profundities that lie within a human personality; they learned about the intricacies of human motive, and the fund of spiritual forces which enable a man in many things, though not in everything, to conquer his environment and rise above circumstances. In days when poetry was more fashionable and people had more time to reflect on the great works of literature, students knew more about the deep wells at the bottom of the human heart and the springs of their emotions. And it is a good thing to read narrative history and even biography in order to learn more about the insides of human beings, the corridors

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and recesses within them—and not talk history in a bloodless kind of sociologist's jargon as though men were machines, or as though we who know so little about the insides of one another can box Martin Luther and Napoleon into a few simple formulas. One of the surprising things in present-day historical discussion is the thinness and crudeness of some people's ideas about human motive, and the shallow academic character of their views on personality. Marxism and its satellite systems, which have done so much in one way for historical study, are doing colossal harm to young and empty minds sometimes, by short-circuiting the real study of history and taking attention away from human beings; and it is useless to pretend to know even how historical forces operate if one does not know the human minds and material upon which they are presumed to be acting.

Further than this, if we give an historical explanation of Charles I it is important to remember that this is not a total explanation—the world up to the present moment has not found a total explanation of anything in the universe. The historical explanation of Charles I is the explanation of just so much of him as can be accounted for by studying his environment and antecedents, and it is compounded of only those ingredients which the concrete evidence (eked out by the efforts of imaginative sympathy) can supply. In a sense, it is only the explanation of the outer man, for the historian knows that he never quite reaches the innermost recesses of the personality. Because of this, all historical explanation is a fabric which has innumerable holes in it—or rather

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windows opening out upon country which is as yet unknown. It can never be regarded as a self-complete intellectual system.

It may be true on the one hand that, so long as there exists no better instrument in the world than a wooden pipe, a serious limitation is bound to restrict the kind of music which it is possible to produce. And provided this example is taken as a mere illustration and not pressed overmuch, it stands as the symbol of the case for an attempt to interpret the past through the study of the materialist basis of history. One point it is absolutely necessary to press, however. In the case of the wooden pipe, the frontiers that are set to any enterprise of the mind are like the fencing round a house; they may block lateral expansion on any side, while still leaving room to soar, still leaving everything up to heaven wide open for the creative activity of human beings. The wooden pipe is tightly constrained and closely confined all round, but it is open at both ends and within the limiting terms of it there is still a sense in which human ingenuity and creativeness might hardly know a limit. The limiting conditions do themselves become opportunities for creative minds. And that is one of the reasons why material conditions are a matter of moment even for the great epic of human history. They are also springboards for human beings. Always we return to the fact that it is human beings who make history.

Furthermore, there are some people—and the Marxists themselves, paradoxically enough, are amongst them sometimes—who seem to see in history a course of continuous inbreeding. They argue that the men who

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decide the turn of events at a given moment are themselves only the product of their age, after all ; and they seem to suggest on occasion that nothing is therefore added—last year's crop has merely been ploughed in again, so to speak. It is a grave mistake to think of human beings as "only" the products of their age. It is a further example of the loose kind of pseudo-scientific thought which has the effect of eliminating personality from the question, and so simplifying the problem at issue. All the influences and ingredients of a given age and environment are by no means sufficient in themselves to explain the next stage of the story, the next turn of events. These influences and ingredients are liable to be churned over afresh inside any human personality, each man assimilating them, combining them and reacting to them in his peculiar way. The result is that nobody is to be explained as the *mere* product of his age ; but every personality is a separate fountain of action, unpredictable and for ever capable of producing new things. In a sense, each separate human being represents something that for the historian is irreducible—himself the possible source of a new stream in history. It is not a disembodied idea, as some men have thought, and not an economic factor, as Marxists assert, but the incalculability of a human personality that is "the starting-point of historical change". The idea of process in history is a dangerous clue in the hands of people who do not possess also a high doctrine of personality. The whole texture of historical writing is in question here.

The modern world has been so materialistic that even

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in regard to war we often seem to argue as though the side which possesses the greater economic resources is bound for that reason to have the victory. Hitler was not wrong when he protested against this view and asserted that superior intellect might make all the difference ; and his career showed that superior intellect might indeed make the difference in conceivable cases ; though it showed also that intellect and success have a way of setting booby-traps of their own for human beings who are wilful. The higher we go in the order of things, however, the nearer we come to the realm of freedom in which an important maxim clearly offers itself to our judgment. While on the one hand, in many of our calculations, we make too little allowance for the effect that conditioning circumstances have on people and on history—so that here the Marxist can rightly reproach us—on the other hand it is the neglect of the spiritual character of personality which makes human beings also forget their liberty. Marxist history tends to ignore the very things in which personality reaches its finest blossom and human nature attains its highest peaks. Those people who pursue materialistic ends in politics or in life are the ones whose actions are most completely under the dominion of necessity.

Having asserted the fundamental and structural importance of the economic factor in history, the Marxist historians, when they write their narratives or studies, too often seem to assume that this is the only thing which matters, or that all the other things in human history may thereafter be taken as read. A caricature of this heresy is provided by a Marxist youth whom

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I knew, who imagined that a knowledge of the basic conditions of the Elizabethan era would provide one with a formula or a condensation of the culture of that period which would render the reading of the more incidental manifestations of that culture (Shakespeare himself, for example) superfluous. This again is the effect of materialism in the popular sense of the word and it would not seem to be correct to regard it as an inevitable consequence of the Marxian method as such. If the Marxist may be right when he puts the economic substructure at the bottom, he is not permitted to place it also at the top, or, alternatively, to dismiss everything else—art, the constructions of the intellect, the achievements of personality and the spiritual things—as *mere* superstructure and therefore unimportant. It is one thing to recognise the significance of economic factors in history, or possibly, for anything I know, a kind of finality which they may even possess “in the last resort”. It is another thing entirely to see the history of religion or culture or even politics as almost a crude by-product of economic history. If it is true that we betray our real values by the things we think it worth while to know about the past—the things we regard as central to history—the Marxists are significant in what they choose to relegate to the fringe. Perhaps they stand as the symptom of an age condemned, partly no doubt by its own errors, to a terrible preoccupation with the material side of life. In one sense also they stand as the voice of the disinherited, not yet schooled in the values of an ancient civilisation, which they see chiefly as an object of attack.

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The severest criticisms of the kind of history which Marxists write, then, have reference to things which are separable from the Marxian method itself, and which are caught rather from the spirit and the atmosphere in which this historical method has so far developed. The faults are often capable of correction within the system itself and it is curious to note that the Soviet historian Pokrovsky argued against the excessive resort to economic interpretation; then, at a later date, Stalin complained that Pokrovsky himself, in turn, had represented too direct a use of the economic interpretation. It is not mere political prejudice, however, that has hardened our minds against Marxist history. We know that when Marxism is at its worst it will even seek to explain anything or everything in the seventeenth century by direct reference to the economic conditions of the same century. In any case, the relations between economic factors and cultural or religious life at any given moment in the history of the world are a subject for actual research. It would be nonsense to have a so-called interpretation of history which prejudged the precise and concrete things which are the very subject of historical enquiry. When the Marxists appear at their most disarming, and admit that, up to date, their writing of history has come far short of the subtlety of their theoretical assertions, we must take care not to be deluded by them—they are only too happy to say that the Gospel is better than the men who follow it. The truth is that, if they lived up to the elasticity of their principles, as expounded by their more refined interpreters, the form and structure of their historical narrative

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and the whole character of their historical universe would be radically changed and would cease to be so serviceable for their polemical purposes. Their theory is one which serves them precisely in its abuse.

If Marxist history, somewhat aggressively and with polemical side-purposes, goes somewhat beyond the rules, we must remember, however, that the great bulk of the historical writing which is produced in the world may always be accused of doing the very same thing. It is our natural tendency to compare Marxist history as it exists in actuality with our own history as we hold it in ideal—to compare it in fact with the most rarefied realm of “academic history”, without remembering the limited range and vogue of this latter. Our traditional English modes of interpretation—including the Whiggish one—as they were developing in the seventeenth century give evidence of what, *mutatis mutandis*, are crudities very similar to those which the Marxist one possesses at the present time in what we must still regard as its youth. It took centuries to refine the crudities out of the English tradition, but here and there we see evidence that the Marxist system is capable of similar refinement and similar elasticity—capable in its higher reaches of issuing in research of an academic character. If there is deceit, prejudice and self-delusion in Soviet historical-writing, these things are not organic to the Marxian method as such, and it might rather be true to say that they are organic to all historical work that has one eye on the support of a government, or the flattery of a regime, or the praise of one’s country or the service of the State. Sometimes it is we who are blind

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and imagine that we are writing history without any presuppositions at all, when we are merely refusing to examine our presuppositions; and it is not clear that Marxist history is not liable to be a formidable rival to the kind of history which the average Englishman holds in his head. In some phases of contemporary history—for example, in regard to the early and later years of the Weimar republic, and in regard to the Spanish Civil War—it is surprising to see how much of British opinion surrendered to a distinctly Marxian interpretation of the story, without realising that it was being guided, or indeed that any “interpreting” was being done at all.

Many of the people who think that they have answered the Marxian view of history seem like so many of those who imagine that they have answered Christianity when they have merely answered some mistaken vulgarisations and popular errors. It is not even clear that some of those who are half-imitators of the system—near Marxists, pseudo-Marxists, and apostles of various kindred interpretations—are not propounding something inferior to the Marxian system itself, at least in some of its higher formulations, and on the whole I think the Marxian system better than its dilution in the work of some people who half-imitate its methods. To those who live in a certain thought-world the picture produced by that Marxian system may even be revolting to common sense; but it contains something that is true, something more that for many of us should be a corrective, and something still again that is plausible. I notice in England that when the natural scientist is attracted to history he is liable to be impressed by the Marxian

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version of it, perhaps because our own academic history is deficient in explanation and exposition, perhaps because the scientific mind finds the schematisation and categories of the Marxist more sympathetic to its own, and does not consider that history may need patterns and formulations which are *sui generis*. The Communist system in much of its method, its missionary policy, its organisation, its thirst for orthodoxy, its authoritarianism, and its severities (when severities are needed for the consolidation of its power)—above all, perhaps, in the Papal insistence that all kindred systems should be in communion with the new Rome—is almost frightening in its mimicry of the Christian Church at certain periods in its history. Armed with the Marxian historical method, and basing its gospel on Marxist history, it contains a sufficient degree of truth to enable it to stand as a serious challenge to the orthodoxies of the world—and to be perhaps the most formidable competitor that Christianity has ever had to face.

MORAL JUDGMENTS IN HISTORY

I

THOSE who go to the works of Protestant and Catholic partisans will find the history of the Reformation staged as a conflict between right and wrong. If they do not become war-weary they will soon be somewhat bewildered; and they will yearn on occasion for a more humdrum narrative—one which will make clear the ascertained data and not harass the mind too severely by entangling the argument with the evidence. What they will hanker after, strangely enough—though they might be shocked to see the matter so expressed—is the technical historian who may be a Catholic or a Protestant but is willing to jettison for the time being his private views and personal valuations. He performs an act of self-emptying in order to seek the kind of truths which do not go further than the tangible evidence warrants, the kind of truths which the evidence forces us to believe whether we like them or not. Though this kind of history is more limited in some

respects than a Protestant version of the story (which will be packed with Protestant evaluations and judgments) it is richer and more far-reaching in other ways, for it is calculated to carry the student to higher altitudes and it can lead him to a further range of discoveries. It may enable him, for example, to get behind the very conflict that divides Protestant and Catholic, and learn why Western Christendom ever came to such a state of dissension. This, then, is what we mean by "technical history"—the sort of history which is the subject of a high and austere academic discipline. It may never exist in its absolute purity. But its assertions have a higher authenticity in so far as the ideal is attained.

Men who in centuries long past were firmly convinced that an outbreak of plague was the manifestation of the handiwork of God would still seem to have been capable of noting on occasion the observable connections between events and the operation of intermediate causes. Those who have believed that a war came as a judgment from Heaven have still been able to observe and discuss the activity of the human instruments of the divine Providence. A natural scientist is pledged to work in the way Gibbon purported to do; that is to say, he confines his explanations to the causes that are "under God", and he would be committing an act of sabotage if he brought God into his scientific argument. It would be wrong to infer that because he submits to this discipline he is necessarily an unbeliever. The historian may be convinced that the will of God is in every step and motion of the drama, every pulse-beat of the centuries. As a technical student, however, he is under

the obligation to perform the particular act of self-emptying that has been described. He is committed to an attempt to learn all that can be learned by the scientific study of just the observable interconnections of events.

If we consider these facts, if we note the nature of the questions which the technical procedure of the historian is intended and qualified to answer, if we bear in mind the intellectual realm in which that kind of question is appropriately discussed, we are in a position to embark upon an estimate of the place which moral judgments ought to have in history. And in view of the situation that has been described, it may be possible to reduce the shock sometimes produced by the thesis which denies any ethical character (in the usual sense of the words) to the technical historian's universe. The thesis may be asserted in so far as it means that moral judgments on human beings are by their nature irrelevant to the enquiry and alien to the intellectual realm of scientific history. It has practical significance in that, granted such a view of the matter, these moral judgments must be recognised to be an actual hindrance to enquiry and reconstruction; they are in fact the principal reason why investigation is so often brought to a premature halt. Yet we do not deny the importance of morality in life any more than we deny the hand of God in history, if we decide to conduct technical history without this postulate. On the contrary we shall find that, at the last stage of the argument, the historical realm emerges as a moral one in what we may regard as a higher sense of the word altogether.

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Indeed we may say that precisely because all men are sinners and precisely because the rest of the truth about the matter cannot be disentangled short of the Judgment Day, the vindication of the moral element in history neither requires nor permits the separation of the sheep from the goats by the technical historian. Precisely because the issue is so important and precisely because life is a moral matter every inch of the way (while no historian can keep his ethical vigilance continuous or trouble to be making moral judgments absolutely all the time)—precisely for these reasons the occasional dip into moral judgments is utterly inadequate to the end it purports to serve. The effect of the whole situation is to make the judgments in question depend on the historian's unconscious selection of the moments at which he will think fit to raise the moral issue. There have been liberal historians who would tend to fix upon religious persecution as the topic which called for the particular act of judgment, as though it were the test case in ethics. It has even happened that the devout and reasonably virtuous person, who at certain periods would have needed exceptional saintliness or real originality of mind to break away from the prevalent principles of persecution, has suffered greatly at the hands of such historians, while the irreligious scoundrel, pursuing toleration from worldly-mindedness and motives of *realpolitik*, has been able to emerge with undeserved honours. Moral judgments are the more apt for this reason to be political ones in disguise—the historian is seeking to add a sort of supercharge to his condemnation of a certain policy. Some Whig historians

would seem to have reserved the severest judgment for the men who support what they describe as "absolutism"; and the rest of the wide world of moral action that is open to a man seems either to be ignored, as a mere matter of private life, or is reserved for a concession made in parenthesis. It is difficult to see how anybody who surveys historical literature—even leaving out of the reckoning the vast amount of writing which patently misuses the occasion for polemical purposes—could feel that justice is done to the place of morality in life by those spasmodic incursions into the field of ethics.

It would be foolish to take arms against the mere *obiter dicta* of historians, however, or against the incidental utterance of personal opinions. These things have a way of leaking into a narrative, and they are not to be taken as part of the structure of the history. We can accept them as the addition of a sort of colouring matter, while refusing to construe them seriously or to admit any pontifical claim that may be put forward on their behalf. A greater danger arises, however, if moral judgments are incorporated in the structure of the narrative, if they control the mounting of the story, and if they become embedded in the very fabric of our historical thinking. Above all it is necessary to resist those who claim for the historian the solemn role of moral arbiter, and particularly those who transfer this ethical preoccupation into the reconstruction of the whole course of ages. Important issues are raised if the struggle of Whigs and Tories is ranged into an epic conflict of the righteous against the unrighteous. Those who pitch their claim so high are tempting the technical

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student to a dangerous form of self-aggrandisement and do violence to the character of academic history. In their whole presentation of the human drama throughout the ages the conflict between good and evil is wrongly placed.

II

It may help us to keep our balance in our analysis of the question if we take note that even in the ordinary course of life the issues of morality are often settled with very little thought. Granting the all-importance of our ethical principles and ethical teaching—granting also the momentousness of the obligation that we are under to follow righteousness in our own conduct—we might wonder whether in reality there is any meaning or purpose in ethical judgments directed against actual people in respect of an action once that action has been done. In fact it is questionable whether any retrospective ethical judgment—I mean the kind of judgment which is directed against a personality—is worth anything, except in the form of the judgment that all men are, and men always have been, sinners. And this particular thesis owes its power and authenticity to the fact that in reality it is translatable for each of us into a self-judgment. For my own part I am willing to say that religious persecution is always wrong. It is wrong even when it is committed by people who are unaware that it is wrong. In other words I believe that it is essential to treat this planet as the kind of world in which

men are allowed to "choose" the God they will serve and the moral end for which they live. Granted that there is only one religion—namely the right one—this religion will be the one to suffer in the long run if that sphere of freedom is brought under the rule of force. I should hope, then, to go to the last limits along with anybody who refuses to countenance religious persecution for any reason. From this it will be clear that clarity or firmness in one's principles of conduct is not by any means the point which is at issue; and if there is question of a man who is about to persecute, we can all agree that he ought to be beset behind and before with the moral argument. From the same standpoint it is easy to say that an action is wrong therefore—the action itself is wrong even if the man who performs it is unaware that it is wrong. Such a judgment is almost a piece of tautology—it is merely a restatement of the original ethical principle. On the other hand, to denounce those who *have* persecuted; to condemn them in terms that suggest them to have been inhuman; to assume that they in turn did not have an ethical principle; and to assert or imply that they were more wicked than I am—all this is improper in itself and is a formidable obstruction to historical understanding.

As a preliminary to the discussion of the problem that concerns the historian, it will possibly serve a purpose to put forward certain general theses relating to the administration of moral judgments in the world at large. Such theses will help to define a mode of approach to this subject and will provide a framework for the argument that is to follow. If they give offence, however, they

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can be rendered otherwise harmless by the addition of the proviso that even if they fail to secure acceptance—even if a great wind comes to blow them all off the face of the earth—still, so far as I can see, this fact ought not to weaken the main argument which follows them, and to which they serve as a background.

The first point, then, is the belief that to some degree men are responsible for themselves and for their actions; but that all men are imperfect and that human suffering is greatly increased and multiplied by this general fact.

The second is the thesis that the difference between the wickedness and responsibility of one man and those of another, in the general world of nature (where it must be recognised that good fortune or adverse conditions play a great but still unmeasured part in the development of human beings), is so idle a question and so nice a point that it is not worth the wear of our fine intellects to discuss it in any imaginable conjuncture of life or history. Indeed, since human responsibility is so subtle a substance, presenting itself with vividness inside me, but not open to my vision at all inside another man—in other words, since I know that I could have done better than I did do while I can never tell what allowances I ought to make for other people—it is impossible to think one man essentially more wicked than another save as one might say: "All men are sinners and I the chief of them". It follows from this that moral judgments of actual people cannot defensibly or usefully exist in concrete cases save in the form of self-judgments.

Thirdly, though I, looking to the immediate future,

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must regard myself as a responsible person who may do things that are moral and immoral, and may follow or betray a law which is written on my conscience or a law that I have imposed upon myself ; yet in regard to other people (who may think earnestly and differ from me about the law itself) and in regard to other people's actions once they are done (so that I cannot now prevent them), the passing of what purports to be a moral judgment—particularly a judgment which amounts to the assertion that they are worse men than I am—is not merely irrelevant, but actually immoral and harmful, not merely dangerous to my soul but unfitted for producing improvement in human nature anywhere.

Fourthly, granted that the State is under the necessity of punishing crimes, and granted that in the case of crime the offence is not merely technical but has moral implications (though sometimes the implications are not so assured or so direct as the world would like to believe), still we are not justified in expanding a legal verdict into a final judgment on a personality, or in assuming that because our own sins do not happen to have been also technical offences they are less morally blameworthy. If a man is sent to gaol, in fact, both the judge and the gaoler are to be interpreted as saying to him : " Look here, old sport, we know that you may be a better man than we are, but since we can't tell what to do in order to save society, we have to resort to force ". If it is necessary to hang murderers, we must be sure that we are doing it because of a necessity and not out of moral indignation. And when we have done it we shall do well to reflect sadly on the bitterness of the

necessity, and say: "There, but for the grace of God, go I".

Fifthly, since moral indignation corrupts the agent who possesses it and is not calculated to reform the man who is the object of it, the demand for it—in the politician and in the historian for example—is really a demand for an illegitimate form of power. The attachment to it is based on its efficacy as a tactical weapon, its ability to rouse irrational fervour and extraordinary malevolence against some enemy. As in such cases its efficacy is not lessened even when it is used unfairly and unscrupulously against those who have done no great harm, the argument for the use of this weapon is valid also for the unscrupulous use of it. The passage from the one to the other is indeed one of the most regular conjuring-tricks in the world.

Finally—so far as these statements of principle are concerned—I should say that, though I assume there are limits, I do not know where to place the limits to the operation of the truth that we condemn where we do not understand. This is tantamount to the assertion that the kind of ethical judgments which historians like Lord Acton have been so anxious to achieve are possible only to God.

All these principles are ultimately referable to the good old-fashioned doctrine that in the created world nothing really matters except live human beings. They would be inconsistent with anything like a Nazi view of human beings or the State or the *Volk*. They could not survive in a world that believed a society or corporation to represent the genuine whole, the authentic Person, with

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individual people as mere limbs of that body. They become submerged altogether if the State is regarded as the ethical end, and actual living people are construed as merely the means to an end. The principles imply that the biography of the worst of murderers could conceivably be written in such a way that he would be what in a technical sense we call the "hero" of the story, so that our pity and sympathy would be around him as we followed him up from childhood. By the same argument what we should desire even in the case of a man like Hitler is not a mere angry denunciation. What would prove of incomparable value, if it were possible, would be an intimate account of him by a person who did not hate him too much—an account which would enable us to see how a lump of human nature (how a boy playing in a field) could ever have come to be *like that*. Best of all for the good of our souls would be an account such as would be written by a mother who was compelled to watch helplessly through the years while this child of hers took to terrible ways. But if it is objected that all this implies too delicate a regard for the effect of conditions on the development of human beings—if it is asserted that it seems to transform men into mere puppets, mere victims of circumstance—a counter-thesis must be stated in terms so uncompromising as to leave no doubt of a man's ultimate responsibility. It must be asserted that neither the outcasts nor the pillars of respectability can in reality escape judgment if judgment is going to be pressed for. Indeed, if we are writing the life of a person whom we think the best of human beings, we may make him the "hero" of the story,

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but this can only be in the technical sense again; we cannot pretend that he is a spotless saint. That is why we must go further than Lord Acton, who was inclined to feel that all the great men of history were bad men. If we want human responsibility we can only save it by something like the general dogma that levels all men—the doctrine that all are sinners, all are responsible for not being better than they are. In other words, none is completely excused if he has allowed even a bad education or the most adverse circumstances to corrupt his character. None is completely free and unconfined, but none is to be regarded as the absolute slave of conditions.

The principles that have been put forward would have to be defended in the last resort on the ground that these, and nothing less than these, enable us to do full justice to the authenticity of other people's personalities in a world where we cannot see inside other people. The theses would be inescapable if one went further and accepted the ultimate principle that no law of God or man, and no alleged utility, can supersede the law or transcend the utility of extending charity to all men, or can set imaginable limits to the law of charity.

Supposing, however, that these statements of principle fail to win acceptance, it may be pointed out that the issue with which we are concerned does not require that we shall commit ourselves to them at the moment. As a view of life they may be brushed aside, but the matter which does immediately concern us is the fact that in any case we must still adopt this point of view and transfer it into the very structure of our story of the past, the

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moment we undertake the work of the historian. In other words, if these theses and maxims are not true in the present world they are a necessary part of the structure of the realm of history. For in this latter realm, certainly, no ethical principle can be alleged to override the primary duty of extending charity, that is to say, increasing human understanding by an effort which always requires the expansion of sympathy.

III

In the conduct of life we shall often find it the case that the world condenses its assessment of a personality into something which it would not be unjust to describe as rather an aesthetic than a moral judgment. The question of a man's charm and his general demeanour, his bravery and the tact which he shows in the conduct of affairs—all these may be rolled up with our moral approval in what is really a judgment of the total product in so far as it is observable to an outsider. It cannot be denied that this over-all judgment of personalities—which is inclined to regard itself as a moral judgment, and as the final summing-up of the matter—tends to award medals to many of those qualities of personality which bloom more readily in the warmth of favourable circumstance. Here, where we applaud a certain nobility of mind or a niceness of disposition in a man, we are not unaware that fortune itself may have had a part in producing the attractive result. There, on the other hand, where we see forms like blasted oaks, we know that fine shapes of

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men have perhaps been devastated as by a flash of lightning. There is much of what we might call the broken crockery of human nature, where sometimes the fractures and deformities mark the effects of a not quite successful struggle with heredity and environment. Human beings are responsible at some point for the use which they make of the materials at their disposal—otherwise there is no sense in a discussion of moral judgments at all. But genuine ultimate assessments of worthiness are beyond the power of our mathematics to calculate. It is well that the ordinary verdicts of the world should be quasi-aesthetic ones and that we should realise them to be such.

Now the limitation of the historian, when he passes verdict on personalities, is that he is so liable to be satisfied in a similar way with the kind of judgment that is much less truly ethical than it pretends to be. Much of the benefit which is supposed to result from the whole practice is nullified by the deplorable fact that the moral judgments of historians are so often taken at a low level; we might even say that these things are almost invariably more rough-and-ready than anything else in the whole complicated fabric of historical writing. In reality they are pseudo-moral judgments, masquerading as moral ones—mixed and muddy affairs, part prejudice, part political animosity—with a dash of ethical flavouring wildly tossed into the concoction. They come blithely from impetuous adjudicators who have a rough idea of Henty heroes shining brightly against the background of something which is not cricket. Against such purveyors of rough justice Acton wrote much of his argument on

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this subject and made a justifiable protest ; and it was in this context that he used the terminology of one who is protesting against a debasement of the currency.

In any case, in the world of pseudo-moral judgments there is generally a tendency on the one hand to avoid the higher regions of moral reflection and on the other hand to make moral issues out of what are not really moral issues at all. And if some may think that this is a laudable symptom of ethical zeal, they are mistaken. Even in the world at large it is rather a decline in genuine fervour which produces the desire to make gratuitous moral issues where such issues ought not really to be drawn. This is the method by which conflicts and controversies between human beings are rendered bitter and cut-throat and incapable of compromise. Against the argument that German historians in recent generations did great harm by avoiding moral judgments,* it is possible to assert that these historians did harm, not through abstention and austerity, but precisely because they were not sufficiently reserved. They inserted pseudo-moral judgments and approvals, mixed ethics with reason-of-state, and tended to ratify and confirm Frederick the Great and Bismarck at the critical points. Indeed it has been commonly the case that those who were most eager to demand moral judgments in history—and who generally insist on the lower kind of pseudo-moral judgments, since a more delicate handling of the matter would hardly serve their purpose—have on the whole been politicians, or men with a more or less direct political purpose, men with an axe to grind, who have rightly seen that moral judgments in history represent a

considerable form of power. When Acton was confronted with the claim that the historian should forgo judgments on people, he betrayed on more than one occasion the fact that what preoccupied him was the fear that those bugbears of his, the wicked Ultramontanes, would in such a case get off scot-free.

Indeed, when the historian asserts the case for moral judgments on people, he is always bound to retreat and turn it into a case for the kind of verdict which pretends to be an "approximation". Only the latter—only the judgment which is mixed with a good deal of earth—will serve the militant purposes of the man who has a polemical intent. In any case, the lofty heights of the former are closed to the historian, whose apparatus and evidence are not qualified to carry him to such rarefied realms. The historian can never quite know men from the inside—never quite learn the last secret of the workings of inspiration in a poet or of piety in a devout religious leader. For the same reason he can never quite carry his enquiries to that innermost region where the final play of motive and the point of responsibility can be decided. The historian fails to pierce the most inward recesses and the essential parts of a man; and all he can depend on is a general feeling for human nature, based ultimately on self-analysis, but further enlarged in a general experience of life. Much can be achieved by a constant practice of that kind of imaginative sympathy which works on all types and varieties of men and acquires a certain feeling for personality. But the only understanding we ever reach in history is but a refinement, more or less subtle and sensitive, of the

difficult—and sometimes deceptive—process of imagining oneself in another person's place.

Equipped with this general knowledge of human nature, the historian, when he deals with an historical character, examines external acts, thoughts that happen to have been put into writing, medical evidence, official records, perhaps the impressions of friends. Always he has to work on external data which he combines with all that he had previously learned concerning the interior of a human personality. He does not study human nature, therefore, in the way that an omniscient deity might observe it, with an eye that pierces our unspoken intentions, our thick folds of insincerity and the motives that we hardly avow to ourselves. It is true that an historian may feel that by imaginative sympathy he has almost completed the gaps in his picture of some historical personage, almost achieved what we might call an internal knowledge of the man. By great insight and by running all his molten experience into the mould that has been presented to him, he may feel that he has found the essential clue to a character—even to a man who has hitherto baffled the interpreters. Even this degree of knowledge fails, however, in that innermost region of all, which has to be reached before a personality can be assessed in a moral judgment. The genuine utility of such knowledge lies in the opposite direction altogether. In reality it adds more than anybody would have imagined to the wealth of historical explanation which can be assembled around a human action or a personality. And that enrichment of historical explanation is liable to be the thing which complicates or

undermines the simple moral judgment which originally we might have been tempted to make.

When Lord Acton issued his justifiable protests against the slackness of the current ideas on the subject of moral judgments, the critical point in his argument had reference to the difficulty that arises from the inevitable incompleteness of the historian's knowledge. Rightly indignant against the casual handling of such important questions, he was wrongly severe, however, in the remedy which he proposed to administer. He approved the principle that we should beware of too much explaining lest we end by excusing the men of the past. Lack of knowledge in his opinion did not justify a suspension of judgment; he thought that the cause of morality would be better served if the historian erred rather by excessive severity. In the famous controversy with Creighton on the subject of the *History of the Papacy* it is apparent that the heart of the difficulty lay at the same point in the argument. Creighton was surely right when he said—after second thoughts on the subject—that he, for his part, could not bring himself to be the judge of Pope Alexander VI and must make allowances for time and circumstance. Acton, on the other hand, must have been right in believing that the historian does not know enough to exonerate such a man, and that, whatever might be discounted for the age of the Renaissance, the ethics of the New Testament had at any rate been in circulation for nearly fifteen hundred years. It is not to be presumed that either of these historians hesitated to agree that certain actions were wrong—that lying and poisoning were immoral.

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The dispute concerned the assessment of an historical personality, the verdict of posterity and of the last judgment—it was a question of the allowances to be made in the summing-up of a man. The truth was that Creighton could not know enough to exonerate. Neither, on the other hand, did Acton in reality know enough to condemn the man himself. It would have been better to recognise that the historian is not competent to make the necessary calculations, and that he carries the whole issue into a different realm of thought. It is not for him to steal the mantle of the ancient prophets; and it is more fitting that he should keep within the limits that his apparatus and evidence have set for him. Within these limits he has indeed a more important task; for Creighton and Acton had not even said the last word as yet towards the settlement of the question whether Alexander VI had actually committed all the deeds imputed to him. Beyond that, it is the real service of the historian to assemble all that can be gathered—everything relating to situation, circumstances, limiting conditions and preceding events—all that will throw a further explanatory light upon the conduct of this Pope. The historian will never be able to settle the controversy between Creighton and Acton or to determine whether Alexander VI had more than his fair share in man's universal sin—more responsibility than the rest of human nature. His function is to surround the man with all that can be gathered in the way of historical explanation.

IV

Working upon a given historical event, then, the historian knits around it a web of historical explanation. If the event happens to be one so anomalous that it has no meaning for us, or so alien to our experience that it leaves us cold, the explanation—which in reality is its reintegration in its context—will establish, so to speak, a means of communication with it. The follies, the crimes and the wilfulnesses that were unspeakable will not be turned into virtues but will at least become humanly understandable. When we think of the men who believed that the sun went round the earth and that Intelligencies moved the planets, we shall no longer brush these fools aside as though they had nothing to do with us. When we hear of pious men who persecuted their neighbours in the sixteenth century, we shall cease to turn our backs on them and bluntly dismiss the affair as a case of ordinary crime. The total result of such habits and procedures is to lessen the inclination to declare in an impetuous way that this man is a fool, that man a criminal, that other one a representative of a vested interest. The effect, therefore, should be from one point of view a greater urbanity; and from another point of view a recognition of wider fields for the exercise of charity. What is essential to the whole task is the realisation that a special effort is needed to comprehend the men who are not like-minded with oneself. There are those who think that there can be too much

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charity, too much human understanding, in the relations of man with man. All that we can do with these is to say that the time has come when this particular issue should be clearly drawn.

Some kinds of history do not operate in the way that has been described. We can discover that it is in their intention—it is considered their virtue—that they should rather kindle the anger and awaken the indignation of men. Such history has played a great part in the generation of the national animosities of our time. And, since all can find something wicked that another Power has done, our continent has seethed with a terrifying passion for justice and redress—seethed with that kind of indignation which feels itself only too righteous, only too sincere. What must be noted in the case of the conflicts that take place between either nations, or parties, or regimes or ideologies, is the fact that each can be fertile and ingenious in its “historical explanation” of one part of the story, while in the other part nothing more is necessary but to bring the effort of understanding to a halt—the mind can rest satisfied for it can clinch the matter with a moral judgment instead. So the Whig historians were not at fault in that they found historical explanation for the conduct of the Whigs. They were wrong because they could not enter with that same *élan* into the sympathetic understanding of the other party.

It can hardly have escaped notice, especially in recent years, how men sympathetic to Communism, when they were confronted by some crime on the part of Russia, were eager to assemble around it what we have called

“the historical explanation” of the event. They were right in this, though, as we have seen, they were wrong if they imagined that such explanatory data could have the effect of authorising the exoneration of the culprits. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that when confronted by the identical crime in a follower of Franco, the identical atrocity in the ranks of the Nazis, they pursued a totally different course, closed down on all historical explanation and insisted on the moral issue clear and clean. Having taken this stand they were able to expose all other people’s attempts at historical explanation as a crime against morality, and the sleight-of-hand was hardly detectable. One witness tells us that English soldiers, fighting the E.L.A.S. in Greece, declared the atrocities of the rebels to be so appalling as to make the armies of Germany appear comparatively clean. In the House of Commons debate on the trouble in Greece, Mr. Gallagher made the point that the outcry against atrocities can itself be unfair—that even the atrocities are to be envisaged with reference to their historical explanation. What the men of the Left Wing will do for the revolutions of the Left the men of the Right will do for the revolutions of the Right; and here is the formula for one of the modern forms of deadlock. It is curious that the world should have been content for so long to allow itself to be entertained by a conjuring-trick so transparent—the hen that has a black patch on the Right Wing seething with moral indignation against the hen that has a black patch on the Left.

The truth is that, as we have seen already, we need no

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help from the historian to bring us to the recognition of the criminality of religious persecution or wholesale massacre or the modern concentration camp or the repression of dissident opinions. And those who do not recognise that the killing and torturing of human beings is barbarity will hardly be brought to that realisation by any labels and nicknames that historians may attach to these things. There is one way in which the historian may reinforce the initial moral judgment and thereby assist the cause of morality in general ; and that way lies directly within his province, for it entails merely describing, say, the massacre or the persecution, laying it out in concrete detail, and giving the specification of what it means in actuality. It is possible to say that one of the causes of moral indifference is precisely the failure to realise in an objective manner and make vivid to oneself the terrible nature of crime and suffering ; but those who are unmoved by the historical description will not be stirred by any pontifical commentary that may be superadded. If historical analysis begins to move further than this exposure of the wickedness of the action itself, however—if it directs our attention to the doers of the action and turns the enquiry into an examination of these—then complications are liable to occur. The offence itself is no less horrifying, but judgment is liable to be affected if it transpires that the perpetrators are African tribesmen driven into a desperate position by white exploiters ; or if the case turns out to be one of direct reprisal, instituted to check atrocities against one's own people. In this manner history draws us further away from our original simple

judgment, if only because it tends to reveal the intricate cross-currents and qualifying circumstances.

Let us take the case of the massacre of St. Bartholomew and imagine that we have traversed the whole range of accompanying facts and conditioning circumstances. Let us say that we have assembled around Catherine de' Medici everything that may have reference to the affair—all that we can discover of her predicament at the time, of preceding events, of her own constitution and structure, of her views, her intentions and motives, as well as all that we can discover of the range of options which was open to her at the decisive moment. Assisted by all this material and by all the humanity we possess, we are now called to resurrect the whole occasion and to see with Catherine, feel with her, hold our breath with her, and meet the future with all her apprehensions. If by imaginative sympathy we can put ourselves in her place in this way, not only envisaging the situation in all its detail but apprehending it in all its vividness and intensity until we reach the point at which we could almost conceive ourselves making the drastic decision, or at least have a sense of just what it would take to carry us across the border to such a decision—then we are historians indeed. In such a case it is in our power to add something to human understanding, though such a contribution would certainly not come in the form of moral judgments. On the other hand, if we cannot achieve this sort of thing at all, if we cannot bring our imagination to such an endeavour, we are in no state to give the measure of a moral judgment either. Nor does it help matters if we pretend to assert: "We cannot

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enter imaginatively into this particular case because Catherine de' Medici was wicked beyond all imagination". The most that we can say in this respect is that either Catherine was wicked beyond any man's imagination or else we ourselves are deficient in this particular quality—either one of the two alternatives may be true. Those who ask themselves which of these two ills of the world they are going to attack had better set about remedying that deficiency of imagination which exists here and now. For Catherine de' Medici, since she is dead, is out of our hands and after all we are not children playing with shadows. She can wait till the Judgment Day.

Some people who wish not merely to condemn massacre as such (which is always legitimate) but to dispose of a whole class of human beings at the same time, attempt to use the case of St. Bartholomew to show that there is an organic connection between Roman Catholicism and atrocity as such, just as people will assume that there is an organic connection between a particular nationality and atrocity, though the nationality does not remain the same in successive centuries of history. One of the great needs of the twentieth century is a scientific study of atrocity and of the moral issues involved.

It has been rightly pointed out that, while men are able so often to be indifferent, or only faintly stirred, or mildly deprecating, when atrocities are committed against the weak or the poor, the fires of our moral indignation will burn to a passionate intensity if they are stoked not merely by our altruism but also by our self-

interest—when we have the good fortune to know that it is an enemy nation, a hostile party, or a business rival that commits the crime. When life is so complicated as this, and the historian himself is in the arena—subject to aberrations much more serious than mere intellectual errors—moral judgments are a loophole for every abuse in historical study. The very dispenser of moral judgments is himself caught in the net—beat upon by the self-same forces that he pretends to survey from the point of view of sovereign mind.

V

It may be objected that the problem of moral judgments is of minor significance, since the historian, without stepping a foot beyond the frontiers of his science, is in a position to cover the requirements of the case. It is his function to describe faithfully the men of the past; and if a politician is regularly drunk or beats his wife or makes money by revealing Cabinet secrets, these very tangible points, which are controllable through specific kinds of evidence, will become part of the description of the personality. Even at a further remove, if a man is delineated as weak in character, or as subject to violent moods, or as having become hardened during his tenure of power, all this, though it is purely descriptive and avoids the pitfalls of moral judgment, leaves us without illusions on the subject of the person in question. Since the historian in his capacity as detective can prove that a man has lied with considerable regularity, what does

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it matter whether the same historian, in the capacity of judge, has power to measure the actual guilt of this, or to decide upon the culprit's real deserts?

It matters because the historian who leaves the realm of explanation and description, and moves into the world of moral judgments, is in reality trying to take upon himself (and to claim for his intellectual system) a new dimension. Very quickly this has its effect on the whole shape and setting which he gives to the course of things in time, and on his whole conception of the drama of human life in history. The morality comes to be worked into the organisation of the narrative and the structure of the historical scene in a manner that is illegitimate. What is projected across the length and breadth of the centuries is the pattern of a universe in which the good men are fighting the bad from one generation to another; so that the whole historical fabric, at whatever point we choose to observe it, is shot through with the colourful contrast of divine right and diabolical wrong. It transpires that the fabric is in truth like a piece of shot silk, for the colour of its parts seems to depend very largely on the way the observer looks at them, after all; and for one historian the Catholic or the royalist or the capitalist or the aristocratic cause may seem to be the absolutely virtuous one, while for another historian only the Protestant or the parliamentarian or the Liberal or the Socialist is on the side of righteousness. Not only does that magnificent war of Right versus Wrong come to look suspiciously political therefore, but historiography itself is seen to be split from top to bottom, so that what some men regard as

the good is for others the seat of all the evil in the universe. In other words, the very aggrandisement that was to have made history the moral arbiter has in reality degraded it into an instrument of the partisan. Each side seeks to extract the maximum firing-power from the weapon by advertising the solemnity and the pontifical character of the moral judgments of history. In times of war and revolution these arguments possess redoubled force, with unfortunate consequences for the cause of historical science.

It is not always remembered that apart from the fervour of the Cavalier and the Roundhead there can be such a thing as a sheer historian's zeal, a passion for the past which does not subordinate itself to militant causes. Besides the ardour for the Whig or Tory or Socialist programme, there can be another kind of flame which is simply a compassion for human beings. It is possible for Catholic and Protestant, each locked in his separate universe, to construct his separate history of the sixteenth century, so that two mutually exclusive narrative structures incorporate alternative wars of Right versus Wrong to suit the taste of the reader. Yet historians who pursue questions belonging to a different order of thought may make discoveries that are equally valid for both religious parties; they may reach something of that deeper kind of truth which embraces and helps to explain even the antitheses. Such historians are drawing together again the torn fabric of historic life, and healing the wounds of mankind and deepening our insight into human destiny. We are right if we wish to see human history in moral terms, but we are

running to myth if we mount the story on the pattern of the conventional war for righteousness.

It is perhaps not too much to say that in the fifty years since the death of Lord Acton the moral constitution of the historian's universe—if we leave out of account the literature which is incident to revolution and war—has been changing its character in a subtle manner. The change may be due to the fact that, whereas in former times men built up their picture of human advance from the study of mighty episodes like the Renaissance, the Reformation and the French Revolution, the more meticulous study of the broad intervening spaces—the central period of the eighteenth century for example—has shown us since that time how much progress is due to the gradual development of things in times of peace and stability, when passions subside and human beings are able to grow in reasonableness. It would perhaps be true to say that, ever since the time of Acton, therefore, a different kind of historical analysis has shown to what a great degree the advances that have mattered in the world have in a certain sense been the co-operative achievement of the whole human race—not so much the result of the victory that one set of men secured over another. The Aristotelians of Padua as well as the Platonists of Renaissance Florence contributed to the development of the scientific revolution. English liberty has been enriched in recent centuries because of the refusal to divide the country irredeemably by the trenchant assertiveness of Revolution—the refusal to carry the issue to the point of a “war for righteousness”. The really important things (like the spread of education

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and enlightenment) have been advanced by a process which can best be described as the work of the leaven that gradually leavens the whole lump.

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I

SOME people seem to deplore what they regard as the anarchy of ideas and systems which exists in the world at large, and even within a single university at the present day. They regret the lack of that uniformity of Christian outlook which characterised the Middle Ages ; or they hanker after the kind of unanimities that are supposed to underlie a Communist order. Romanticising about the harmony of a regime in which there exists this happy agreement about fundamentals, they close their eyes, however, to the ugliness of the methods by which such a system has to be achieved. They overlook the fact that perhaps only at certain periods in the history of a civilisation can such a thing be regarded as achievable at all.

One important fact seems to condition the history of modern thought—a fact that is rooted in the very constitution of the universe. It is the fact that unanimity is easy to reach amongst human beings on concrete

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questions very near to earth, such as the question of the effect of heat on the substances to which it may be applied; but as soon as one moves to a higher level, to the question of the nature of heat itself, for example, or, higher still, to the question of the origin of all heat, human beings seem to differ more widely the more lofty the intellectual region to which the matter is carried. Where the mind of the group predominates and the spirit of the herd keeps men close together a certain solidarity can certainly be achieved for a time even in the higher reaches of thought or speculation. But if it is not true that civilisation always moves towards a higher differentiation of personality—and towards a greater respect for individual people, or for the options they make at the highest levels of thought and decision—it is certain that a Christian civilisation must move in this direction, especially as the element of voluntariness is bound to be an important factor in a religion so personal and intimate.

A Christian civilisation, precisely because it must embrace so high a conception of personality, must move towards what Christians themselves may regard as its own undoing—towards freedom of conscience instead of greater solidarity in the faith. A world in which personality and conscience are respected, so that men may choose the god they will worship and the moral end they will serve—this, and only this, is a Christian civilisation when human development has reached a certain point. Precisely as such a civilisation becomes more advanced, the problem of securing uniformity in the most lofty realms (such as that of religion) becomes

more overwhelmingly difficult. It is a fundamental part of the case against Communism that it puts back the clock in this respect (or perhaps that it flourishes only where humanity is in a backward state); and in any case, since it cannot be argued that unregenerate man is naturally Christian, it is bad tactics as well as bad ethics for Christians to dwell too greatly on the advantages of uniformity as such. Uniformity would only be too likely to come at their expense—the unbeliever treating them to those severities which, so long as they had the power to do so, they meted out to him. It is legitimate, then, for Christians to hope to convert as many people as possible, but not to translate this hope into a dream of terrestrial power, or to expect from Providence that the dice shall be loaded in their favour and the forces of the world itself ranged on their side. We must first praise God for the human intellect and the freedom of the mind, and only after that is it legitimate to pray that men—as free men—may come into some degree of unison. Christians are strongest if, regarding themselves as the servants rather than the masters of men, they claim no peculiar rights against society as such. They must claim the right to worship the God in Whom they believe, and they have no justification for regretting that others should have the same freedom in the matters that most highly concern human beings. This tolerance is the minimum that we must have to make a Christian civilisation.

This being in fact the situation, whether we like it or not, we do not despise the liberty that so many generations fought for ; nor shall we risk adding to the dreadful

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mistakes which ecclesiastical authority made in the past in respect of this matter. We do not deplore the anarchy and variety of ideas and systems, but ask only that the sparks shall be kept flying—ask indeed that there shall be more scepticism in both Christians and non-Christians over much of the spacious realm of thought—hoping that, if the non-Christian is not converted, even he may be induced to greater elasticity of mind. In particular our educational institutions ought not to be quiet pools, where intellects shall comfortably settle down, but a seething cauldron of ideas, a fair arena for the clash and collision of intellectual systems.

It is in this kind of a world—a world where Christianity as in New Testament times stands on its merits against a more or less neutral or pagan background—that we must consider the attitude of the Christian to history as a branch of scholarship. We will take account of the whole question of the scientific method as such, and also of the peculiar features of history as a human study. Then it will be relevant to consider the question of the possibility of a Christian interpretation of the past.

II

Over a considerable part of its area history may be conceived to be a science in the sense that it studies very concrete and tangible things, such as can be tested and attested by a definite kind of evidence. Further-

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more, it examines the observable or demonstrable connections between those things—the relationships between various kinds of what we call historical “events”, for example. Technical history, on this definition, is to be regarded as a mundane and a matter-of-fact affair, and serves only limited purposes. It may provide us with a demonstration that Jesus Christ did live or that a certain saint died at the age of fifty; and if it does prove those points it proves them for all men, whatever their faith—its argument is valid for Catholic or atheist, for Marxist or Mohammedan. There are many things, however—and those much the most important—which the technical historian knows that his evidence and his apparatus give him no special right to decide. Amongst them we should include the quality of Beethoven’s music, the rightness of the Reformation and the question of the divinity of Christ. When the technical historian explains the victory of Christianity in the ancient Roman Empire, we should not expect him to say that the success was due to a decree of Providence or to the authenticity of the religion itself. We should rather expect him to provide an empirical study of certain tangible things that gave Christianity its efficacy in the world of that time. There would be many cases where the historian would be aware that he had not found the clinching argument, or fully established even so concrete a thing as a date, or demonstrated his hypothesis to the satisfaction of all his fellow-students. This kind of history, therefore, ought not to appear as a self-complete intellectual system or as a continuous piece of explanation without any holes

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in it. In reality it is merely the extension of the universal habit of men to reflect on the observable connections between events—beginning, one might say, with the daily rising of the sun, or the experience of the trouble that is likely to be provoked if one steals one's neighbour's food.

If it is asked how this initial view of history—this view of it as a science—is connected with Christianity, or it is argued that so mundane a conception of the subject is actually inconsistent with religion, one may reply that on the contrary there are reasons for suggesting that this approach to any science is a specifically Christian one. It is the view which comes from regarding the historian as a person under a certain kind of discipline for the purpose of examining the ways of Providence and the structure of the providential order. It does not deny Providence. It does not hold that events will form a self-explanatory system without any necessity for the idea of God. It relegates scientific history to a humble rôle, therefore—certainly not assuming that the study of demonstrable events will suffice either to answer the question whether the hand of God can be found in history, or to explain why man exists, or to settle ultimate philosophical problems. And certainly it does not assume, as the Marxists and so many other secularist thinkers seem to do, that when we have learned the history of a thing we shall have achieved its final and total explanation.

The scientific method that we are discussing seems on the whole to have come into existence in the way that has been described—both the natural scientists and

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the historians acting in the belief that they had found a better means for studying the ways of Providence. And this affected the situation in a definite manner, for it meant that they felt themselves to be operating only on the outer fringe of something far bigger than their instruments and observations could reach. They felt a greater distance between the kind of thinking which analyses a blade of grass more and more minutely or observes the stars over wider and wider expanses of space, and the kind of thinking which estimates the nature of the universe or judges the meaning of life or decides the question of the existence of God. It was discovered that by restricting oneself to the realm of secondary causes, one could pursue certain kinds of more mundane enquiry to better purpose. This is at any rate one of the secrets of the transition to the scientific method of modern times. •

It appears to be the case that the scientific method gained great impetus from the fact that students of the physical universe recognised the search for final causes to be too difficult as well as too distracting for the particular purposes of physical enquiry. Here, as in history, the restriction of scientific attention to the analysis of tangible things or their inter-relations freed the mind for a more specialised form of research and released the thing we now call science from its entanglement with all the pretensions of a "natural philosophy". The case for the scientific method was strengthened by the discovery that students of differing philosophies and religions might discuss Nature to better effect if they shelved ultimate questions and debated more tangible

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things—things which, when once established, were established for men of all persuasions, so that there was common ground for intellectual interchange. At the next stage in the story, and almost sometimes apparently in absence of mind, men came to imagine that final causes had been disposed of, and Providence eliminated altogether; and this meant that one had locked oneself inside the scientific method, so to speak, forgetting the terms on which one had got into it in the first place. It was a modern piece of wilfulness which made men think that technical history and natural science were qualified to settle ultimate philosophical questions for us while they themselves were in an interim stage, as they still are, nobody knowing what surprises they may bring at the next turn in the road. When Sir Isaac Newton established the laws which govern the relationships between the movements of the heavenly bodies, some men slipped too easily into the view that the entire universe was a “mechanical” affair—even chemistry and biology became too mechanistic. Like the mathematician who discovered that God worked as the Great Mathematician, they ran too quickly from the conclusions reached in a certain field of science to over-all assertions concerning the whole order of created things. In reality the very factor which gave the scientific method the advantage in efficacy and intensity and *élan* was the restriction here described—the restriction of the scope of physical enquiry itself.

If the historian becomes interested in processes and laws or finds subtle conformities of pattern in the movements of events, this, too, is not to be regarded

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as uncongenial to the Christian outlook. Regularities in the universe were discovered very early, and even in Old Testament times it would have been no marvel for God to stop the sun if the normal motion of the sun relative to the earth had not been an accepted idea. It is possible that the belief in the existence of a coherent world-system was encouraged by monotheism and that the search for rationality in the universe was furthered by the fact that men believed in an intelligent Creator. Some seventeenth-century scientists seem to have felt that Creation itself would be imperfect and the rationality of God in doubt if the physical universe could not be envisaged as a perfectly dovetailed system of laws. Even in the Middle Ages men were aspiring to discover the very kind of laws which Sir Isaac Newton ultimately put forward for explaining the heavens and elucidating the problem of motion. It almost appears that religious minds could hanker after laws and rationality even before the modern scientist had found a more adequate way by which to discover the form of the laws themselves.

I do not quite know what this realm of law is, under which we see the universe operating, or how far it represents merely some kind of rapprochement between our limited reasoning and an external world which we only partly envisage at best. Sometimes I think it is like the case of the man who wanted to cut up a piece of soap for analysis, and, having used a square-shaped potato-cutter for the purpose, ended by discovering that squareness or squarity or the capacity for being cut into squares was the essential quality of soap. For those who have forgotten the origin and the terms of the

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method I have been describing, technical science and technical history may become like tightly woven screens, all the threads of which are interlocking, all the meshes drawn as close as possible, to cut the student off from any outer light. And we must not exult too readily if there seem to be some holes in the screen—we must not say that this is something unaccounted for, so it must be God—for the scientists if not the historians may answer that with the acquisition of further knowledge they count on closing up that particular kind of hole. It is possible to hold that scientific explanation, though a limited thing, can conceivably be an unbroken fabric so far as it goes—in other words, can, within the limits, be self-complete.

We might imagine ourselves locked in the system that natural science and history fasten around us if there were not one glaring hole in the screen—a hole which nobody can ever pretend to patch up. There is something which is closer to us, more intimate, more real, more direct, than all the external evidence in the world. The only thing in the universe which any of us can know in any sense from the inside is a single personality—namely, himself; and only from an internal knowledge of ourselves can we begin to build up our impressions of other people. The primary judgment that any of us makes, anterior to all philosophising and all scientific endeavour, is a judgment that conditions all other judgments—namely a judgment that we make about ourselves. The historian, in this particular sense, does not regard personality as a mere “thing”, to be studied as other external things are studied. At this point, as

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we shall see, he rises above what are generally regarded as the ordinary methods of science.

It may be suggested that, though religious men have been inconceivably unwise on so many occasions, the Christian who adopts the view of the scientific method that has been described is in a position to hold his mind more free for hypothesis than those who seek from science their over-all view of life and the universe. It is the Marxists and the secularist systematisers of our time who, without reaching as high as God and without confining themselves to necessary inferences from observed phenomena, commit their minds to vast intermediate systems of ideas—systems which are less capable of elasticity than science itself demands, and which control the range of hypothesis sometimes, or constrict the adventures of the mind, since they create their own demand for conservatism and consistency. On one occasion in the Middle Ages, when the teaching of Aristotle insisted that God Himself could not have created a vacuum or an infinite universe or a plurality of worlds, an ecclesiastical decision rejected this limitation upon the power of God, and freed these things for hypothesis in a way that the Church has too rarely dared to do. The believer in Providence can be prepared for any surprises. The Christian need put no limits to the Creator's versatility.

One cannot even feel certain that the view of truth to which we are accustomed would long survive the existence of a Christian civilisation. It may still transpire that the notion of what we might call absolute truth is not unconnected with religion—not unconnected

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with the feeling that here is something which at any rate you cannot cheat God about. One is tempted to suggest that there has been perceptible in Marxist propaganda a view of historical (and even scientific) truth which, if it were developed over a long period, would have an unfortunate effect upon the pursuit of knowledge and the very conception of scholarship. It is difficult to be sure what safeguard there would be against such a "utilitarian" handling of truth if the world were to go on becoming increasingly pagan or at any rate increasingly materialistic in its preoccupations and ends. The ideals of "academic" history may transpire to have been the legacy of a Christian civilisation after all. If Christians themselves when writing history have sometimes been too intent on a kind of "truth" which attracted them merely because it seemed to serve a good purpose, they have operated, as Christians no doubt often do, against the tendency and the ideals of Christianity itself.

On the whole issue of the scientific method we may say, then, that if it is not a specifically Christian thing, it did at any rate develop in the heart of a Christian civilisation. Many of the people who actually developed it maintained that they were glorifying God in the very pursuit of their researches. The case was different from that of Aristotle and the ancient Greeks precisely because the science had specialised itself out, and was no longer rolled up with natural philosophy. It is not clear why there should be any conflict between religion and the scientific method, unless the religious man is too materialistic or the scientist becomes arrogant.

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And modern science has been beneficial for Christianity in that it has forced Christians to disentangle their faith from theories of the material universe; it has made religion cease to be plausible except as an essentially spiritual thing. On the other hand, the essential effect of Christianity on the form of scholarship that has been described is one not merely congenial to science itself but absolutely indispensable to it—namely, to increase the necessity for intellectual humility. The worldliness of modern man is not the result of the devising of the modern scientific method and is possibly rather a characteristic of modern urban civilisation. And if we say that at least the scientific attitude gives great leverage to the worldliness of worldly-minded men, it can equally be said that it gives great leverage to the spirituality of spiritual men, for it is in itself a neutral instrument. Even if they are not scientists or historians, men do occupy much of their day in some sort of commerce with concrete things. The director of a cathedral choir who forgot the importance of worship, and lived rather for music as such, is seduced by the world in the same way as the student who makes science the very end of all his endeavours and the sum of all his interests.

III

If history is of some importance by reason of the things which it can establish scientifically, however, large areas of it are by no means so positive as this phrase would suggest to many people. In a similar way we might

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say that large areas of it are less capable of reduction to regularity or law than many people would seem to wish. History tends to differ in its whole organisation from anthropology because it gathers itself to such a degree into stories about personalities. And Marxist history, which sometimes seems to aspire to something like the organisation of anthropology, surprises and shocks many people because it looks less like life—it is so much a matter of process and schematisation, so little interested in the individual.

The kind of history which has developed in our civilisation and was handed down to the twentieth century has clustered around personalities and we have tended to think of it as organising itself into the form of narrative. It resurrects particular periods, reconstitutes particular episodes, follows the fortunes and discusses the decisions of individual people, and rejoices to recover the past in its concreteness and particularity. It does not limit its interests to the things that can be reduced to law and necessity—a project more feasible to those who direct their studies upon the materialistic side of human beings and human purpose. It is more interested in what is free, varied and unpredictable in the actions of individuals ; and the higher realms of human activity—the art and the spiritual life of men—are not inessentials, not a mere fringe to the story. The play of personality itself is not a mere ornament in any case—not a kind of cadenza or violin obligato—but is itself a factor in the fundamental structure of history. The historical process is so flexible that all the future would have been different in a way that it is beyond the power

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of our mathematics to calculate if Napoleon had been shot in his youth or Hitler had failed in January, 1933. In this sense history is like life and every individual should be aware that it does really matter to the world what decision he makes on a given issue here and now.

Now, this attitude to the study of the past, if it is not to some degree the effect of our traditions—our Christian civilisation, with its high view of personality—is particularly congenial to those traditions and particularly appropriate for the Christian. It implies a telling of the story which has the effect of doing justice to freedom as well as necessity, and in which the spiritual (as well as the material) is organic to the theme—not a mere added ornament. It is typified in the flexibility of narrative, and is to be contrasted with the kind of history which sets out rather to schematise the centuries or turn everything into a process. The traditional historian has shown an interest in individuals for their own sake, and in a bygone generation as an end in itself, which we in our civilisation have perhaps too easily taken for granted. It is possible that a grossly materialistic civilisation, too intent upon utilitarian purposes, would not see the point of these things and would not produce the kind of fabric that we call history. The Christian must defend it however; for this is a kind of history in which—in a certain sense at least—personalities are the irreducible things.

Our traditional historical writing has gone further than this. It has refused to be satisfied with any merely casual or stand-offish attitude towards the personalities of the past. It does not treat them as mere things, or

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just measure such features of them as the scientist might measure; and it does not content itself with merely reporting about them in the way an external observer would do. It insists that the story cannot be told correctly unless we see the personalities from the inside, feeling with them as an actor might feel the part he is playing—thinking their thoughts over again and sitting in the position not of the observer but the doer of the action. If it is argued that this is impossible—as indeed it is—not merely does it still remain the thing to aspire to, but in any case the historian must put himself in the place of the historical personage, must feel his predicament, must think as though he were that man. Without this art not only is it impossible to tell the story correctly but it is impossible to interpret the very documents on which the reconstruction depends. Traditional historical writing emphasises the importance of sympathetic imagination for the purpose of getting inside human beings. We may even say that this is part of the science of history for it produces communicable results—the insight of one historian may be ratified by scholars in general, who then give currency to the interpretation that is produced. A Thomas Carlyle might convince us that he had found a clue to Cromwell, and yet he might fail to carry us with him in his reconstruction of another person like Mirabeau. The whole process of emptying oneself in order to catch the outlook and feelings of men not like-minded with oneself is an activity which ought to commend itself to the Christian. In this sense the whole range of history is a boundless field for the constant exercise of Christian charity.

IV

At this point it becomes relevant to discuss the possibility of a Christian interpretation of history within the scheme of things which is now in question.

What we begin with is a form of historical scholarship restricted to a realm of tangible things, things which are to be established from concrete kinds of evidence. It is necessary to make inferences from the evidence and to have insights into personality, but the inferences and the insights belong to the same limited realm; they are, so to speak, very near to earth. In fact, we should expect them to be generally communicable, indeed to be ratified by a certain consensus of opinion, before the result could be accepted as a part of scholarship. In all this we may feel that we are studying the ways of Providence, but we cannot say that we have demonstrated the existence of Providence—we cannot say: “Here is evidence that ought to be sufficient to convince any neutral person”. When we have reconstructed the past all that we have obtained is a picture of life as it must appear to any person living in the world; except that, whereas an individual only sees his three-score years and ten of it, he can now extend his vision and recognise certain long-term processes and tendencies.

If in life a man has accepted the Christian view of things, he will run these values throughout the whole story of the past, and, taking the very basis of narrative which historical scholarship has provided, he may see

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every event with an added dimension. He will have used historical science in order to become a closer and better student of the ways of Providence. He will see the vividness and appropriateness of the Biblical interpretation of history for the study of any country in any age of its history. He will not claim that historical science has demonstrated the truth of the interpretation which as a Christian he puts upon human events. His over-all view of things is partly dependent on the attitude that he brings to history in the first place; and partly it is dependent on the most intimate judgments that he makes about himself, about life as he has experienced it, and about the course of centuries as he has gathered it from historical scholarship. In this sense there is a Christian interpretation of the whole human drama, which is simply an interpretation of life—indeed, an aspect of the religion itself.

It is often assumed, however, that within the field of historical scholarship as we have described it, there is a Christian organisation which can be given to the narrative; in other words, that the European history which appears in our educational curriculum can be given such a form that it bears a Christian interpretation and vindicates the Church not merely in its spiritual functions but in its mundane policies. It soon becomes apparent that there has to be a Protestant history which is not only different from the Catholic version, but violently contradictory to it at times. Indeed, the attempt to vindicate Christianity in history easily turns into an attempt to justify Christians instead.

In the particular realm with which we are concerned

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at this point in the argument it is possibly unfortunate if the student of history ever ceases to regard himself as essentially an enquirer. Nothing so hardens the mind as an attachment to a particular reconstruction of history which we may have motive for cherishing because it establishes a case. It is true that the mere yearning for historical comprehension has sometimes seemed to be an insufficient motor for the mind, and has left scholarship lacking in one way or another until (as Lord Acton once pointed out) sheer polemical passion has brought a relevant fact to men's attention or has driven a violent partisan to an original piece of exposition. A Christian writer who possessed such polemical fervour might call attention to something which previous historians had overlooked. If he established his case the matter would become a constituent of historical scholarship in general, however; it would no longer be the mark of a specifically Christian view of the past.

It would perhaps be regarded as legitimate to envisage the history of Europe as the story of a civilisation which developed under the presidency of the Church and which for many centuries bore an unmistakably Christian stamp. It would be necessary to be very cautious, however, in any attempt to make polemical use of this particular formulation of the narrative. In other societies and other regions there have been other religions which have presided over the development of a civilisation; and sometimes the parallels, as in the case of Islam, are very remarkable. If we may infer that at certain stages in the development of a civilisation religion can have a presiding rôle in the

story, we can hardly turn this into an argument for ecclesiastical predominance in entirely different stages in the history of human and social development. Furthermore, in the form in which we are now considering the case, it is difficult to see how it can be used as an argument for one particular creed as against another.

It is possible to produce a form of history which gives the Church the credit for all the good that is done, but, when wrong decisions have been taken—however disastrous for a generation—attributes these merely to the defects of the human agencies, so that “the Church” is always right, whatever men may do. On this view, every ecclesiastical decision ever taken about mundane affairs might be wrong—might even be recognised to be wrong—and yet “the Church” itself never come within the range of criticism. Such a form of argument would have its dangers if in various respects and in the affairs of the world it were difficult for people to hold fast to the distinction between “the Church” and its human agencies. Ecclesiastical systems, in the form in which they confront the historian, have their aspect as very tangible, astonishingly human, systems. An optical illusion concerning them would serve the purposes of real live men who might be desiring an illegitimate form of power.

We are saved from some of the optical illusions if we say that Christianity itself is always right and it is just the Christians who, because they are only human, tend to go wrong in history. Yet an hostile observer might argue that an exclusive religion can even produce terrible evils in the world unless accompanied

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by a great amount of charity—a greater amount than has sometimes seemed to be available. He might argue that, where charity is defective, there is liable to be a special rigidity in religious morality or convention, a rigidity which has made Christians or ecclesiastics lag behind other people sometimes on ethical points on which Churchmen of the twentieth century have come to lay great store. An hostile observer might even point out how the insistence upon what is due to God—in the matter of actual property and wealth, for example—has been used to cover ecclesiastical interests of an extremely earthy nature, and even abuses of a glaring kind.

Three things, however, seem to illustrate the importance of Christianity in that mundane history which is under discussion—the importance of the particular religion which presided over the rise of what we call our Western civilisation. They all spring from the very nature of the Christian gospel itself and their effects on our civilisation are merely the incidental results of the ordinary religious activity of the Church—they are not a sample or a vindication of the mundane policies of ecclesiastics. They are by-products of the missionary and spiritual work of the Church, and it is not clear that the same mundane benefits would accrue if men set out with the object of procuring the mundane benefits—if men worked with their eyes on the by-products themselves. They show that the Church has best served civilisation not on the occasions when it had civilisation as its conscious object, but when it was most intent on the salvation of souls and most content to leave the rest

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to Providence. The three things are the leavening effect of Christian charity, the assertion of the autonomy of spiritual principle, and the insistence on the spiritual character of personality. Apart from the softening effect that religion often (but perhaps not always) has had on manners and morals, these things have had their influences on the very texture of our Western civilisation.

In this sense Christianity has operated through the centuries to greater effect than Christians themselves have done, to greater effect indeed than Christians sometimes seem to like it to do. It has operated for liberty even when Christians are opposing liberty and even when ecclesiastical authority has been the very enemy that has had to be fought. It is remarkable to see how greatly modern freedom has risen out of Christian history and modern liberalism out of medieval politico-ecclesiastical controversies. It is remarkable to see how many of our freedoms have been built upon an initial religious claim for liberty. In a similar way, the assertion of the autonomy of the spiritual principle in the Middle Ages prevented anything like absolutism and produced in society a friction that was stimulating. The conflict between ecclesiastical and lay authorities allowed in any case greater play for the individual than a completely totalitarian system admits of. In modern times a Christianity in opposition—the Nonconformists in England for example—inherited the claim that had been asserted on behalf of the spiritual principle, the claim that it should stand on its own feet and if necessary not merely oppose the government but criticise the very form of society on moral grounds. This Christ-

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ianity in opposition is the father of many of the modern movements of social and political reform. It might be objected that many of the liberties and reforms which we in England particularly prize, and which the West claims to represent as against the Soviet system, were largely developed, and largely made effective, only after the period when our Christian civilisation had become predominantly secular. Even the reformers who came into conflict with the Church after 1700, however, did not realise to what a degree they had merely secularised many features of the Christian outlook, though they imagined that they had entirely cut loose from Christianity. As twentieth-century pagan civilisations develop their barbarities we shall realise more and more what—even amongst non-Christians—has been the leavening effect of Christian charity and the Christian outlook.

If there is anything which the Christian might peculiarly feel about our European story—though he could not scientifically prove it or expect his view to be shared by those who do not share his beliefs—it is an impression of the liberty and spontaneity and originality of the spiritual factor in history. For many of the enemies of Christianity this picture is hidden by the rigidities to which religion is liable when the spiritual factor is defective, or by the tendency of ecclesiastical systems to slide into routine. Yet non-Christian historians have done justice to the amazing power of spiritual men, though holding that these were defective in their self-examination and deluded in their spiritual interpretation of their inner life. It is important to note that it is the material world that is under the

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dominion of necessity. As States become more materialistic in their objects and purposes, State-policy itself becomes more powerfully dominated by necessity, and countries must cringe and cower under civil services becoming ever more unimaginative, more constricted by that environment which now controls men instead of being controlled by them. But men who have had Christian love in their hearts have been carried to original courses, driven to surprises and eccentricities. Those who have asked, "How shall we worship God?" have had a spirit that thrust itself out into Gothic cathedrals; they are liable to be at least more original and refreshing than those who say, "Why shouldn't we have some art, like the Greeks?" Where Christianity subtly affected the character of our civilisation—just here is the point where our world might have been different altogether supposing another religion had conquered the Roman Empire. The ultimate vindication of the Christian religion in history, however, is not to be found in any of its mundane by-products, but in the spiritual life itself. Because this is so intimate a matter we discern it better perhaps in biography than in European history as seen in the large.

V

It cannot be too greatly stressed that history is a thing which requires to be taught in totally different ways at different levels. The method most adequate to its purpose is perhaps the mere telling of stories to the very

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young, with possibly a side-glance at some moral that may be drawn from the narrative. One curious piece of inflexibility has possibly been ruinous to history as an education—the idea that there exists an ideal scheme or map of history and that between students aged nine, fifteen, twenty and twenty-three the only difference in the history to be taught is a difference in the scale at which the map is reproduced. When boys of nine are being taught the structure of the feudal system or sixth-form students are being pressed into work of university character in advance of their status, great opportunities are being missed, and the fallacy is like that of the ancient painters who presented the infant Jesus as a man merely drawn on a smaller scale. It is possible that for some young people history will be useful as containing examples from which a certain amount of political teaching may be elicited. Since history, however, is so intricate a network, with everything so entangled with everything else, it is not clear that sets of model instances, a modern equivalent of *Æsop's fables*, would not serve that particular purpose more adequately. The book of *Isaiah* may be used for devotional purposes or, alternatively, as an historical document, but it is not clear that the latter alternative will be the useful one for everybody. And it could hardly be claimed that every man should be trained in technical history, especially as even this training does not make a person really competent to range over all the centuries. Bury was a great scholar, but when he wrote on the nineteenth-century papacy he made howlers which would prevent an undergraduate

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from gaining the bottom class in a university examination on the subject.

Owing to the way in which the world has naturally developed, owing to the pressing necessity for so many kinds of technique, owing to the fact which we have already noticed—namely, that men can agree on the subject of the effect of heat on water while they come to differ radically when they rise to higher questions—owing to these things, the most important sides of education, and particularly the training in values, the communication of an adequate world-outlook, have come to be for the most part outside the framework of an ordinary curriculum. This is not entirely to be deplored, however, if the fact is faced and recognised, and especially when the family plays its due part in the education of the young; for we should hardly expect a formal education to teach the most important things, such as the aesthetics and the strategies of falling in love. It might be understood, however, that when Christians are teaching even the strictly technical kind of history, they in particular would remember the limits of the science, the need for humility of mind, the importance of getting inside human beings, the call for charity, the dynamic quality of the spiritual factor in history. It might be understood that they would see English history as part of the story of a Christian civilisation rather than a self-contained world, to be described with patriotic innuendoes.

It remains true throughout, however, that in teaching or reading or writing history the richest wisdom and the finest educational nourishment comes from the

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things which we generally describe as *obiter dicta*—the comments that are made in aside, the places where private views and the results of personal experience leak out, the things, shrewd and intimate, that a teacher throws in just for love. Once again we need not complain—we may actually rejoice—that the finest things in education must come from the creativity of the teacher himself and are extra-curricular by necessity.

The microscopic study of the transition to the “mechanistic” idea of the universe in the seventeenth century has shown to what a degree at the crucial moment men like Mersenne were moved by the argument that divine miracle could never be justified unless it could be shown that the world in its normal processes was regular. The truth was that one of the chief things that they had to fight was the current high-brow view of the universe as quasimagical in character—a place where everything was so to speak a “miracle”. Paradoxes like these are the parables of history and they illustrate the manifold ways in which religion itself helped to bring about modern sanity in respect of the purely material world. Let us be quite clear that in the field of history the Christian should be the first and the most extreme in demanding the scientific attitude; even though men may still differ so greatly in the evaluations which they place upon the results of the scientist’s researches.

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IN spite of the development of technical historical enquiry during the seventeenth century, and the recognised importance of historical study in the systems of eighteenth-century thought, it would seem to be true that the modern rage for history was born out of the morbidities and nostalgias of the Romantic Movement. It was assisted by the reaction against the French Revolution, which in England—particularly in the teaching of Edmund Burke—tended to confirm the nation in its attachment to its own past and its belief that the liberties of the country went back to times immemorial. Englishmen have particularly prized the continuity of their history, and have found something rich and fruitful in the very fact of continuity ; all of which was to have its effect on our interpretation of our national story. In Germany, on the other hand, during the Romantic Movement, men were particularly conscious of the tragic political situation of the country in modern centuries and they tended to contrast it with the glories of the Holy Roman Empire of medieval times.

In general, we see in the nineteenth century one of the most important movements in the whole story of

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European thought: namely, the great development of history and of historical thinking. Not only did history become a principal branch of study, but it affected all other departments of mental activity. As an English writer once said, in the nineteenth century human thought in every field seemed to run to history; and this was true for example of philosophy in Hegel and of a great deal of Protestant theology. The movement was one in which Germany held the intellectual leadership. Furthermore, it is chiefly to Germany that we owe the great advance which was achieved in the development of a more scientific study of the past, the evolution of a higher and more austere form of scholarship; all of which made it a much more serious matter than it had ever been before to write about past events. Partly because Germany was so large a country, she was able to reach a higher degree of impartiality than most other people. If she had some historians who were inclined to support Prussia, for example, there would be other historians in different parts of the country who were opposed to Prussia; and somewhere or other in Germany both sides of the question would be stated, and the truth was more carefully tested as a result. In the development of high and austere standards of scholarship English students in particular set out to be the disciples of the great German writers of history, so producing what for a long time was a remarkable intellectual alliance. Lord Acton once suggested that this German historical movement in the nineteenth century was a more fateful step in the story of European thought than even the famous Italian Renaissance of the

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fifteenth century. It seems to me that we must agree with this view, for the Renaissance did not add a new ingredient to our Western civilisation in the way that the historical movement of the nineteenth century was able to do.

The twentieth century has not been so happy for the historical sciences, and these sciences are gravely injured by two things which have turned out to be the great plagues of our time—namely, wars and revolutions. In all countries the very interest that governments have come to have in history—government patronage of historical study—has proved to carry with it hidden dangers. The very popularity of history amongst new classes of people (who are sometimes lazy readers, sometimes unaware of the necessity for the older critical canons, and sometimes unconscious of the way in which wishful thinking operates in the study of history) has produced many new embarrassments, especially in a world where men have learned how powerful history can be for purposes of propaganda. The establishment of many new nation-states since 1918 has also proved to be not always a good fortune for historical study in Europe. New nations are particularly sensitive about their historical past, particularly jingoistic in their national pride. And it seems that small nations, especially if they are new nations too, are liable to be more intense and local in their prejudices—they are sometimes more narrowly self-concentrated than the greater ones. It is going to need a harder struggle everywhere to keep up the standards of academic scholarship in future than it did before 1914.

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We are now in a position to survey the influence which something like a hundred and fifty years of historical study has exercised on the development of modern Europe. It is not clear that as yet we have learned all that there is to learn from this particular aspect of the history of historical science, or fathomed all the effects that the study of the past has itself had on nations and their policies. Concerning historians as interpreters and guides in the affairs of their own generation, I have read some severe things that Englishmen have written about German scholars, and there are similar things that the Germans have said about us. But the world still waits for the wag who will scientifically examine the nineteenth and twentieth-century writers of history and show us how far their studies and researches really did raise them above the fevers and prejudices of their time—how far in reality it is plausible to argue that historians are wiser than the rest of their contemporaries on political matters. And a more scientific age than ours may even find materials for an analytical treatment of associated questions; for, to take one example, it would be interesting to see it demonstrated whether it is always prudent to rely for political advice on the kind of "expertness" which the "regional historian" possesses—at any rate the one who, through the knowledge of one of the obscurer languages has happened to acquire something approaching a monopoly in his field, without having to face any great clash of scholarship in his own country. And if we say that a given expert on Ruritania must be right provided he is accepted by the Ruritaniens themselves, the history of historiography

will be able no doubt to raise a debate even on this issue.

At any rate it is possible even now to make certain comments on the part which historical reflection has played in the development of the errors that have been so tragic for the twentieth century. And in this connection there is one law which makes itself apparent if we examine the events of the last one hundred and fifty years ; and that is the paradox that a great deal of what people regard as the teaching or the lessons of history is really an argument in a circle. In reality the historian is in the habit of inserting some of his present-day prejudices into his reconstructions of the past ; or unconsciously he sets out the whole issue in terms of some contemporary experience—he has what we might call the modern “ set-up ” in his mind. In this way English writers once tended to see the ancient Greeks as modern Whigs ; the Germans would read something of modern Prussia even into ancient Rome. Magna Carta would be interpreted in the nineteenth century in the light of modern English constitutional problems. Those who dealt with the medieval Holy Roman Empire too often envisaged it with the nineteenth-century conflict of Austria and Prussia in their minds. Sometimes there has been a tendency to project the prejudices of the present day into the structure of the past as it was envisaged in long periods and in general terms—the tendency for the British to say, when France was the enemy, that France had been the “ eternal enemy of mankind ”. In England the view once prevailed that German history was particularly the history of freedom,

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for it was a story that comprised federation, parliament, autonomous cities, Protestantism, and a law of liberty carried by German colonists to the Slavonic east. In those days it was the Latin States which were considered to be congenial to authoritarianism, clinging to the Papacy in Italy, the Inquisition in Spain and the Bonapartist dictatorships in militaristic France. The reversal of this view in the twentieth century, and its replacement by a common opinion that Germany had been the aggressor and the enemy of freedom throughout all the ages, will no doubt be the subject of historical research itself some day, especially as it seems to have coincided so closely with a change in British foreign policy. The historian, then, can even deepen and magnify present-day prejudices by the mere fact that he so easily tends to throw them back and project them on to the canvas of all the centuries. And the more the historian seeks to please his generation or serve his government or support any cause save that of truth, the more he tends to confirm his contemporaries in whatever they happen to want to believe, the more he hardens the age in its favourite and fashionable errors.

Before 1919 I was taught a kind of history which saw in the sovereignty of national states the culmination of the progress of centuries—the very end towards which history was moving. I remember how the Reformation itself would be applauded for having released the nation-states from “the fetters of internationalism”; and it was the custom to show that history, especially in the nineteenth century (the “Holy Alliance”, for example), had demonstrated the folly and futility of

attempts to form anything like a League of Nations. From 1919, however, one saw the teaching of history reorganised and text-books rewritten—the events of the past now marshalled to serve a different purpose, and in particular the course of nineteenth-century European history reshaped—this time for the purpose of proving that all the centuries had been pointing to a different kind of consummation altogether, namely the League of Nations. I am not concerned with the question which of these views was the true one. But I should have been more impressed if on both those occasions the historian had not been so inclined to ordain and dispose his subject-matter, and lay out the whole course of centuries, for the purpose of ratifying the prejudice that already prevailed for other reasons at the time. It can easily be seen, therefore, that the historian who most desires to please his age—the historian whom we most applaud because he chimes in with our views—may be betraying us, and may rob us of one of the possible benefits of historical study, namely the advantage of an escape from merely contemporary views and short-range perspectives. On the other hand, Burckhardt and Acton gave the nineteenth century certain warnings which the lapse of time has proved to be of great significance. It appears, however, that a generation does not take much notice of a message that it happens to dislike.

The things which happened in England have taken place in the historiography of all other countries; and of course the Englishman sees the error when German historians make it, and the German sees the error in the

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foreigner too, but none of us seem able to jump out of our own skins and to see our own position with a certain relativity. And for the most part there is much too little disposition even to attempt the task. Sometimes historical students take tremendous trouble with the details of their researches, but when they come to the important point where they build up the larger framework of their story or draw their final conclusions, or pretend to extract from the narrative its teaching value, they are liable to become very casual and to be totally unaware of the processes that are taking place in their minds. They do not realise that very often they are smuggling into history the things they eventually imagine themselves to be extracting from it—the penny that they draw out of the slot-machine is the very penny that they first put in. Even after the historian has collected data and sifted his materials with industry and discrimination, a very minute addition of wishful thinking may deflect the whole organisation of the results. A desire for self-justification may set the historian at a slightly wrong angle ; and the extension of the lines of the picture may mean that this apparently small deflection will ultimately have the effect of carrying him far away from the central course. Indeed, history can be very dangerous unless it is accompanied by severe measures of self-discipline and self-purification—unless we realise that there is something that we must do with our personalities. Let us note, then, that historians have developed a remarkable scientific apparatus for the discovery, handling and sifting of historical evidence. They have not always remembered that this leaves vast

areas of historical reconstruction and historical thinking which have not yet been brought under the same scientific control, though the history of historiography may enable us to make further advances even here.

The situation is more serious than anything that has so far been stated, however ; for I think it is true to say that in the European politics of the last two centuries certain errors are discoverable which were born out of historical reflection as such—errors which would not have been made if people had not been so interested in the past and so concerned with it. The influence of historical study in the nineteenth century led to the creation of what we can only regard as new kinds of myths—things which came with the mysterious halo of religion about them and were almost made to serve as substitutes for religion. Amongst these I should put the myth of romantic nationalism, the modern religion of exaggerated nationalism, which is a perversion of such principle of nationality as had existed hitherto. That myth had historians as its high priests while its prophets were a particular type of student of the past who enquired into the history of languages and interested themselves in early folk-literature. Moreover, ideas which are introduced into historical scholarship at a high level soon become degraded into myths. Instead of being developed in a flexible manner with the passage of time, they are repeated with rigidity, dragged into different contexts, tossed to and fro in the market-place and generally hardened and coarsened in the rough-and-tumble of the world's affairs. Historical memories, especially in Eastern Europe—and also in Ireland—have

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engendered much of the national animosity of modern times. In a far wider sense than this the over-stressing of the historical argument in modern European politics has been unfortunate both for historical study and for diplomacy. One must wonder sometimes whether it would not have been better if men could have forgotten the centuries long ago, and thrown off the terrible burden of the past, so that they might face the future without encumbrances. And above all, when history has been accompanied by a tendency to regard the past as an independent source of rights, or when it has been accompanied by a tendency to worship the primitive stages of one's national culture and the uniqueness of a national mentality, it has made its contribution even to that serious drift of the modern world in the direction of irrationalism—the flight from the old ideal of a universal human reasonableness.

It would seem that history possesses certain initial attractions which will prevent it from being overlooked in any consideration of a scheme of general education. It is one of the subjects which purport to produce a "well-informed mind", and it answers many of the requirements of ordinary curiosity. It is capable of easy discussion across a table without necessary resort to any long-term intellectual system. It gives an extension to the material which the mind can gather for the purpose of manufacturing into experience. And it imparts the kind of knowledge which throws light on the problems of the present day, and which can be used to broaden our consciousness of citizenship, whether in a nation or in the world.

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On the other hand, against mathematics (for example), it has the disadvantage that mere progress from one chapter to another—the mere perusal of a larger area of the subject-matter—does not in itself constitute or impose an intellectual discipline. The mere reading of history, the mere process of accumulating more information in this field, does not necessarily give training to a mind that was initially diffuse. For this reason it is not wise to learn history by a hasty accumulation of information, so that the mass of data clutters up the memory and the growth of knowledge too greatly outstrips the general development of the mind. Furthermore, in the case of mathematics we start with our feet on the hard earth, learning the simplest things first, firmly establishing them at each point before we go any further, and making our argument good and watertight at each step of the way. In other words, we begin with strong foundations of concrete, and we gradually build our skyscrapers on the top of this. In the case of history, on the other hand, we start up in the clouds, at the very top of the highest skyscraper. We start with an abridged story, seen in the large and constructed out of what in reality are broad generalisations. It is only much later, when we reach the actual work of research, that we really come down to earth and arrive at the primary facts and primary materials. Only at the end of many years of training do we come to know what it means genuinely to establish the assertions that we make. For this reason, history is dangerous as an educational subject; and the best kind of history-teacher is not the one who tells us most clearly what to believe—not the one who seeks

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merely to transfer a body of knowledge from his head into the heads of his pupils. The best kind of history-teacher is the one who realises the danger of the subject itself and construes it as his function to redeem and rescue it as far as possible.

If our Western civilisation were to collapse even more completely than it has done, and I were asked to say upon which of the sins of the world the judgment of God had come in so signal a manner, I should specify, as the most general of existing evils and the most terrifying in its results, human presumption and particularly intellectual arrogance. There is good reason for believing that none of the fields of specialised knowledge is exempt from this fault; and I know of no miracle in the structure of the universe that should make me think even archbishops free of it. But it is the besetting disease of historians, and the effect of an historical education seems very often actually to encourage the evil. The mind sweeps like the mind of God over centuries and continents, churches and cities, Shakespeares and Aristotles, curtly putting everything in its place. Any schoolboy thinks that he can show that Napoleon was foolish as a statesman, and I have seen Bismarck condemned as a mere simpleton in diplomacy by undergraduates who would not have had sufficient diplomacy to wheedle sixpence out of a college porter. I do not know if there is any other field of knowledge which suffers so badly as history from the sheer blind repetitions that occur year after year, and from book to book—theses and statements repeated sometimes out of their proper context, and even

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sometimes when they have not been correctly understood ; and very supple and delicate ones turned by sheer repetition and rigidity of mind into hard dogmatic formulas. I have seen historians condemn the Middle Ages for their blindness in quoting and requoting earlier authorities and so perpetuating an original error ; when it was in fact these self-same historians who were doing just that very thing—repeating judgments at second-hand—in the very act of stating that particular case. I do not personally feel that in modern times technical history, in spite of all the skill that has gone to the making of it, has ever been taken up by a mind that I should call Shakespearean in its depth and scope, save possibly in the remarkable case of Ranké. I think that, compared with the novelists, the historians have even been coarse-fingered and too lacking in subtlety in their handling of human nature ; so that, if he had only the novelists and the historians to judge from, a visitor from another planet would think that they were talking about two different kinds of substance.

In any case, though we had an Aristotle or a Shakespeare as an historian, the best that any of us can do at a given moment only represents the present state of knowledge in respect of the subject with which we are dealing. There is a profound sense in which all histories—like all scientific interpretations of the universe—are only interim reports ; and in history the discovery of a small fact that may be pivotal is calculated to produce a drastic reshaping of the whole field of study. It is not so much the concrete facts—like the date of the battle of Waterloo—that are liable to such

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drastic revision, but rather the whole organisation of the story. In other words, the effect of the revision falls most of all on that region where our moral lessons, our teaching-conclusions and our verdicts have their roots. In a manner that we cannot imagine or quite foretell our historical conclusions are liable to be transformed and wrenched into a different shape when for fifty years English, German, French and American scholars have co-operated in the gigantic task of historical revision. Professor Trevelyan said in his Inaugural Lecture in Cambridge that the world would be liable to be plunged into bloodshed if teachers and students disseminated wrong history. There can be no doubt of this ; 'but any generation that looks back to any previous generation can hardly close its eyes to the fact that wrong history is being taught in all countries, all the time, unavoidably. Research is being constantly conducted by thousands of people over the globe for the purpose of correcting it. And the corrections—especially in the case of comparatively recent history—are often very surprising and disconcerting.

History, in fact, is so dangerous a subject—and so often it is the sinister people like a Machiavelli or a Napoleon or a Lenin who learn "tricks of the trade" from it, before the majority of people have thought of doing so—that we might wonder whether it would not be better for the world to forget all of the past, better to have no memories at all, and just to face the future without ever looking back. We must teach history, however, precisely because so much bad history exists in the world already. Bad history is in the air we

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breathe, and even those who do not pretend to know any history behind the days of their grandfathers are dangerous sometimes, for they too are the slaves of unconscious assumptions or concealed perversities on the subject of the past. From one point of view we must say that none of us learns history—none of us ever attains a final understanding or the kind of knowledge in which he can safely rest. From another point of view, however, we may say that there is great need for history all the same, provided we conceive it as a process of unlearning. Something can be achieved if we can sweep away only a single layer of the tremendous crust of error that already has the world under its grip. Perhaps we may say that we sweep away one layer of error from our minds when we are at school; another layer when we study history at the University; and a further layer still if we reach so far as actual research. Indeed, supposing we continue the study of history all our lives we may sweep away a further layer of this crust of error every ten years, if we can keep our freshness of mind. But we do not complete the process. We do not reach the stage when we can say that we comprehend a particular subject in a final manner. For this reason it is better that men, when they leave the University, should forget the history of Louis XIV as they learned it there, unless they are prepared to continue the process of "unlearning". It is better that they should not allow the knowledge to freeze in their minds, while the world changes, and historical science changes—better that they should not thirty years later be holding too rigidly in their memory the things learned

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so long before. For historical knowledge is valuable only while it is, so to speak, liquid—it is worse than lumber if it freezes and hardens in the mind. We may say, then, that it is better for men to forget what they have actually learned of Louis XIV and cling rather to the experience they gained in the study of history and in historical exercises. History is more useful when transmuted into a deeper wisdom that melts into the rest of experience and is incorporated in the fabric of the mind itself.

The dangers of history are liable to become much greater if we imagine that the study of this subject qualifies us to be politicians or provides us with patterns which we can immediately transpose into the context of contemporary politics. It is not even clear that English people are wise in teaching a knowledge of Tudor government if their ultimate objective is to show young people how their country is governed in the twentieth century. I once read a detective story written with the intention of showing precisely the movements and operations that take place at Scotland Yard after a murder has been reported. If our object is to show future voters how the wheels of government work, some such method applied to the Cabinet or any other part of the constitutional system would seem to me to be more appropriate than the study of history, as the Schools Section of the B.B.C. have apparently discovered.

The argument that history qualifies men for the practice of politics is one which had a certain relevance and validity when it was used by the aristocrats who ruled England in the eighteenth century; but they were

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thinking of history as an additional acquirement for people who were supposed to have had their real education already. In any case, those English gentlemen of the eighteenth century were brought up from their very childhood to be rulers and politicians. They saw the practice of administration, heard political discussion, learned the arts of management in their local estates and observed the conduct of public affairs at first hand from their earliest days—they were being educated all the time in the actual practice of politics. For these people history came in its proper context—it was the one additional thing which would widen their horizon. Since they knew so much about the practical working of current affairs they were politicians already, and the study of history was calculated to make them better ones precisely because it broadened their horizon. I should seriously question the validity of a parallel argument for the modern democratic world and our modern educational system. We are wrong to think that the study of history itself is sufficient to turn us into competent politicians. And it is perhaps a tragedy that nowadays so many people—even if unconsciously—are in reality building up their political outlook from what they have read in books.

Some of the best diplomatic historians I ever met were almost the worst diplomats in the world when it came to transacting business in real life. It is often said in England that history is useful, and that it qualifies people to take part in politics, because it enables them to see how such things as politics and diplomacy work. I once had to induce the governing body of my college

in Cambridge to try to come to an agreement on the colour of a carpet for a college library. A person who has had to undertake such a task and who has discovered all the manœuvrings, all the delicate tactics, the persuasions, the whole science of give-and-take, that are necessary to get twelve men to agree on the colour of a carpet—such a person may be said to have had his first lesson in diplomacy. A person who merely reads a life of Bismarck is liable to be deceived a hundred times over, owing to the sheer fact of unavoidable abridgements, even if for no other reason. In our condensed version of the story a host of little shiftings and successive adjustments and minute manœuvrings made by Bismarck over the course of a number of weeks get compressed and telescoped together—so that they cake and solidify into one big thing, a mighty instantaneous act of volition, a colossal piece of Bismarckism. My teacher, Professor Temperley, once reminded us in Cambridge that when the research student goes to manuscript sources, to the original diplomatic correspondence, for example, he does not go merely in order to have a scoop and to uncover some surprising secret ; he goes to the sources primarily in order that by an actual day-to-day study of the whole correspondence he shall learn the way in which diplomacy works and decisions are arrived at. Only the research student really studies things at close enough quarters to understand the complexity of these processes.

Indeed, abridged history—through the mere fact that it is necessarily so abridged—is having the effect of leaving the world with many serious misconceptions. By foreshortening the picture and making Bismarckian

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strokes of policy more trenchant than they really were, abridged history gives men a greater appearance of sovereignty over events than they actually possess ; and it tends to magnify the controlling power of governments over the next stage in the story. With the decline of religion, and in the absence of anything else that seems authentic, men and nations rely on the abridged history they have learned to give them their impression of their place in the sun, their purposeful intent, and their idea of what they can do with their destiny. They acquire an academic dream-impression of what statesmen can do in the world, what governments achieve, what their national mission is, and what can be brought about by sheer self-assertion and will.

In any case, the world rarely remembers to what a degree the pretended "lessons" which are extracted by politicians from history are judgments based on the assumption that we know what would have happened if some statesman in the past had only acted differently. When historians so often assert that the Congress of Vienna made a mistake in neglecting the "principle of nationality", we may wonder whether they have really faced for a single moment the question: What would have happened in Europe if the Congress of Vienna had followed the twentieth-century view? There was much talk in 1919 of the necessity of "avoiding the mistakes of 1815"; and when a person has been fed with the apparently self-evident verdicts of abridged history, it is difficult to convince him that in any event this is a fallacious formula for policy. What you have to avoid in 1919 are not the mistakes of 1815 but the mistakes

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of 1919. What you have to avoid is too blind an immersion in the prejudices of your own time. Those who talked of "avoiding the mistakes of 1815" were using history to ratify the prejudices they had already. In any case, men are slow to count their blessings and quick to see the faults and shortcomings of the world into which they are born, and in 1919 it was the general cry that Europe must not be saddled with the burden of a settlement as unsatisfactory as that of the Congress of Vienna. It took our knowledge of the difficulties, weaknesses and ephemerality of the Versailles settlement to make us realise that the state of the question is entirely different. What we want to learn now is why the Congress of Vienna was so much more successful than we have known how to be.

Not only do historical judgments rest so often on an assumption concerning what would have happened if a certain statesman had acted differently—if only Metternich had done *the other thing*, for example—but there is a rigidity that occurs in our treatment of the possible alternatives, for we so often imagine that there was only one alternative, when in reality there was a great range of them. We overlook, therefore, the complexity of the mathematics that will be required to work out the displacements which a different event would have produced, as in the case of the problem of what would have happened if Napoleon had won the battle of Waterloo. So from an armchair every Tom, Dick and Harry in England can conduct a facile course of reasoning which will satisfy him that he could easily have thwarted Hitler at an earlier point in the story, because he, for his part,

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would have done *the other thing*; as though in such a case a man like Hitler would not have done something different too at the next remove, and a host of other factors would have to be altered, the historical process quickly complicating all the calculations that require to be made. Indeed, history adds to the errors of a rigid mind and only serves us when we use it to increase our elasticity.

Over a quarter of a century ago Paul Valéry produced a serious criticism of historical study, and it is not clear that his main charge has been answered—his criticism is certainly applicable to that kind of historical education which is directed merely to the “learning” of history, the acquisition of the sort of knowledge which is examined in memory tests. He put his finger on a critical point, indeed on what perhaps is the very crux of the matter, when he suggested that the effect of historical study was to produce a certain lack of mental elasticity. This, as he showed, was liable to be particularly harmful in a world where changes were coming in such rapid cascades that the mind could hardly be expected to move quickly enough to catch up with them. I believe it is true to say that many people in England in 1919 looked back upon the previous hundred years of European history, and saw that during that period events had been moving in a certain curve—moving in the direction of “liberalism” and “nationality”, for example. Too easily and unconsciously they assumed that in the coming years the course of history would continue that curve: so that their knowledge of the past, especially of the very recent past, robbed them of a certain flexibility.

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They would have been better equipped to meet the developments of the succeeding decades if they had studied in ancient history the deeper processes that political bodies have been observed to undergo over long periods. When Norway was invaded in 1940 the view was put forward in English official quarters that Hitler had broken one of the laws of history, in that he had conducted an invasion across water without possessing the command of the sea. Again the rigidities to which historical thinking are liable were the cause of deception. Even if a thing has never proved possible in the past we are not justified in inferring directly that history has proved such a thing to be impossible. When France collapsed in 1940 many Englishmen regarded it as self-evident that that country had made a tragic mistake in preparing only for defensive warfare and putting her trust in the Maginot Line. A French statesman said, however, that he, for his part, regretted not the construction of the Maginot Line but the failure to continue something of the sort to the sea. Other alternatives still were open, for the explanation of the downfall of France—including the possibility that her armies had made the reverse of the mistake generally imputed to them, by rushing with too great *élan* into Belgium when hostilities were opened in that region. On occasion it might require very subtle calculation and a microscopic sifting of evidence to decide the choice between the alternative interpretations that are possible in a situation of this kind. Few people take this trouble, and it is exactly in choices of this type that a very slight insertion of "wishful thinking" carries the

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majority of men to what is apparently a self-evident conclusion. One of the dangers of history lies in the ease with which these apparently self-evident judgments can be extracted from it, provided one closes one's eyes to certain facts. The person who is incapable of seeing more than one thing at once—incapable of holding two factors in his mind at the same time—will reach results all the more quickly and will feel the most assured in the judgments that he makes.

I imagine that if we wish to study the effect of historical study on the actual conduct of affairs, one of the appropriate fields in which we can pursue the enquiry is that of military strategy. In general, it is not possible to have a war just for the purpose of training the leaders of an army, and it has been the case that the teaching of strategy was for a long time carried on by means of historical study—for a hundred years by a continual study of the methods of Napoleon. Since the time when Machiavelli inaugurated the modern science of war there have been grave misgivings about this use of history. Machiavelli himself was open to the reproach that since he required the detailed imitation of the methods of the Romans, he refused to believe in artillery. Similarly, it would appear to be the case that if men shape their minds too rigidly by a study of the last war, they are to some degree unfitting themselves for the conduct of the next one. If a nation decides conversely that it will set out with the particular purpose of avoiding the mistakes of the last war, it is still liable to be the slave of history and to be defeated by another nation that thinks of new things. Historical study,

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therefore, has sometimes had a deadening effect on military strategists ; and it has often been a criticism of them that they were too prone to conduct the present war on the method of the previous one, forgetting how times had changed.

It seems true, however, that many of the errors which spring from a little history are often corrected as people go on to study more and more history. If a man had a knowledge of many wars and of the whole history of the art of war, studying not merely the accounts of battles and campaigns, but relating the weapons of a given period to the conditions of the time, relating policies to circumstances, so that he came to have an insight into the deep causes of things, the hidden sources of the changes that take place—if he allowed this knowledge not to lie heavily on his mind, not to be used in a narrow and literal spirit, but to sink into the walls of his brain so that it was turned into wisdom and experience—then such a person would be able to acquire the right feeling for the texture of events, and would undoubtedly avoid becoming the mere slave of the past. I think he would be better able to face a new world, and to meet the surprises of unpredictable change with greater flexibility. A little history may make people mentally rigid. Only if we go on learning more and more of it—go on “unlearning” it—will it correct its own deficiencies gradually and help us to reach the required elasticity of mind.

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I

MUCH has been said about contemporary history from the point of view of the expert, but the issues that are raised belong to a court of wider jurisdiction. A word on this subject will perhaps be allowed, therefore, to the student of historiography who tries to see the experts themselves in their due relationship with everything else. The experts have a great advantage in the nature of things, and when they have the peculiar position of being "official" historians (or even "officially-favoured" historians) so that they can say "We have seen the evidence and you have not ; besides, our ways are hidden ways"—in such conditions they might well feel themselves out of reach of criticism. I, for my part, can only cross-examine the experts and analyse the situation itself from the point of view of a general historian who exercises the prerogatives of a critic in respect of a field or a period not his own. I do indeed have one qualification for speaking on contemporary history which, without betraying any secrets, I can say

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that all people do not possess. I am not an official historian employed by the British or any other Foreign Office; I am not limited by special obligations under the Official Secrets Act in the communication of what I do happen to know; and if I feel that I have anything to write or say, I do not belong to that new class of so-called "independent historians" who have first to submit their scripts to the check or censorship of a Foreign Office official.

Of all the principles which touch the life of States and peoples it seems to me that the most important in the secular sphere is the one which insists upon freedom of thought, by which I mean of course freedom in the expression of thought—freedom (supposing I am in a minority of one) to attempt the task of converting the majority. Under the shelter of this general principle, there will exist (when the body politic is healthy) an independent science of history, not hostile to the government but standing over against it—a science which will seek to present the cause of historical truth as distinct from the things which might be promulgated from motives of *raison d'état* or for the sake of a public advantage or in order to cover the imprudences of politicians and government servants. Our predecessors recognised perhaps better than we do, however, that such an independent science of history would always tend to find the dice loaded against it for the time being; for it is difficult for men to place truth above public advantage when public advantage might mean the winning of a war, the circumvention of a diplomatic crisis, the covering of a reputation, or even an improvement in

general welfare. Against those who demanded that the historian should more directly serve his time and age, the German historian Meinecke, even in 1916, asserted in a moving manner the long-term advantages of academic history ; but it must be remembered that in more pressing times it is easy to feel that the historian should serve the government—easy to overlook the long-term benefits of an historiography which insists on keeping a higher altitude. In a case where a change in the relationship of the State to historical study is in question, causes may be lost by the selling of very little passes—even by unconscious compliances and complicities. Eighteenth-century Whiggism was correct in stressing the point that when men have inherited freedom, and have not had to fight for it themselves, they easily allow it to slide away, not realising that concessions apparently innocuous, when made to people whom we happen to like and trust, become at the next remove the ground from which a new generation of men can make a more serious encroachment on liberty. Some of our nineteenth-century historians wrote as though they remembered much more clearly than we do that freedom is always a fight, always a striving, always a matter of vigilance and alertness. The relations of a government with historical study are on a different footing from those which exist in the case of any of the other sciences. It is necessary for the outside student, therefore, always to be on his guard.

The relationship of technical historians to “official history” in our days is no doubt good for official history which can only benefit from the connection.

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It is even calculated to bring out some revelations earlier than might otherwise have been the case, though we must never forget that it enables other things to be kept concealed with the greater impunity. The good which is produced for the time being turns to serious evil, however, if the new situation has the effect of blurring old distinctions; and one of the disturbing symptoms of the present time is the fact that attempts have indeed been made to blur the distinctions, as will appear from some examples given below. It is necessary not to allow the new state of affairs to conceal the fact that what we have to deal with is still official history. If that point were to be overlooked in a universal absence of mind or suspension of criticism, too good a bargain would have been made for the State, and an important cause would have been put in jeopardy. In any case, there is need for a very precise code of guarantees to assure one that the interests of independent historical science have been guarded in a watertight manner, considering the pitfalls that exist. Official historians are serving the public, it is true; their labours are sometimes of colossal magnitude; but they get the reward that is certainly due to them. If they are true to the ideal of academic history they will agree that all forms of official history should be regarded with the greatest caution, the greatest critical alertness; and they will see that their own hands are strengthened by the very clamour of criticism, the very importunity of their enemies. It may be necessary that official history should be produced. It is equally necessary that it should be subjected to unremitting scrutiny.

II

If I may be allowed to give what at least is not an unconsidered opinion, I must say that I do not personally believe that there is a government in Europe which wants the public to know all the truth. If there is one which does have the desire, it has an easy way of proving its good intentions, for it has only to open its archives to the free play of scholarship—to friends, enemies, neutrals, devil's advocates and independent observers, so that everything may be put into the crucible and we may know the worst that the eagle eye of a hostile critic may pounce upon, the clash of controversy ultimately producing a more highly-tested form of truth. There are two maxims for historians which so harmonise with what I know of history that I would like to claim them as my own, though they really belong to nineteenth-century historiography: first, that governments try to press upon the historian the key to all the drawers but one, and are very anxious to spread the belief that this single one contains no secret of importance; secondly, that if the historian can only find out the thing which government does not want him to know, he will lay his hand upon something that is likely to be significant.

My own teacher and predecessor, Professor Temperley, stood at what I should call an intermediate stage in the development of modern "official history"; for, along with Dr. Gooch, he held what now seems to me a peculiarly independent position as editor of the *British*

Documents on the Origins of the War of 1914—negotiating with the Foreign Office not from the inside, so to speak, but from a more arbitral position outside. And we know that serious tension existed at times in the course of that publication, for after some volumes had appeared the editors found it necessary to announce their threat that they would resign if their decisions were not followed; though I believe it is true to say that the tension was due to the difficulties raised by other Powers, and not to any anxiety that our Foreign Office then had on its own account. Since it seems to me that the editors of the *British Documents* knew as much about the relations between historians and governments as any Englishman of their generation, there are three of Professor Temperley's utterances on this subject which have a peculiar significance and which invite us to serious reflection. First of all, in his Inaugural Lecture in Cambridge in 1930 he expressed grave misgivings concerning the harm that might come to history from both the patronage of government and the growing popular interest in the subject. Secondly, in almost the last article—if not the very last—that he wrote (an article published in 1938 in the *Cambridge Historical Journal*) he depicted the decline of frankness—the growing significance of secret diplomacy—in the policy of English Foreign Secretaries during the hundred years that ended with Sir Edward Grey. He closed that article with words which throw a curious light on the inferences that he was inclined to make upon the whole of his experience, for he said: "It is indeed evident that no statesman in our own generation will approach

the standards of candour in diplomacy upheld by Palmerston or by Canning". Thirdly, in a manuscript which appeared in the *Cambridge Historical Journal* in December, 1948, he set down some views concerning the origin of the war of 1914—views somewhat different from those commonly accepted as a kind of semi-official orthodoxy to-day ; but even in the unusually independent position that he occupied as an editor of the *British Documents* I am interested to note that he felt himself under some constriction ; for, though he wrote down these views in 1927, he particularly specified that his name should not be attached to any publication of them until the last of these volumes of documents had appeared—which in fact proved to be a decade later.

After the First World War, a special situation was created by the existence of revolutionary governments not unwilling to discredit the dynasties or the regimes which they had displaced, and therefore not unready to make a generous publication of diplomatic documents which should throw light not merely on the immediate origins of the war itself but also on the events of the preceding years. These revelations had the effect of springing the secrets of other Foreign Offices, too, of course ; and the result was bound to be unsatisfactory to these latter, for the simple reason that one's diplomatic secrets do not appear at their best when revealed in the papers of another government. Other governments were encouraged, therefore, to publish their own diplomatic documents in turn ; and within a single decade after the conclusion of peace in 1919 an extraordinary development had taken place in the whole

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historiography of the origins of the war of 1914. This was particularly remarkable in the minute researches, the intricate collation of documents, and the detailed detective work which are evident in certain major writings of the late 1920's. The original simple "melodrama" of 1914 was transformed into a story of higher organisation altogether—a story possessing that texture which a piece of history seems to acquire when, instead of burying the recalcitrant fact and the inconvenient discrepancy, it allows itself to be driven by these very things to a higher synthesis altogether.

The rise of Hitler and the consequent political strain or fever seem to have had a serious effect on that whole type of scientific enquiry in England. Not only was the great task discontinued, but there occurred one of those remarkable throwbacks which occasionally take place in the history of historical science—we had a general return into currency of the primitive, garbled, war-time versions of the origins of the war of 1914. The view that what happened was in reality a retrogression can be supported by tests of an external kind, tests which might be put forward as affording general criteria for a judgment of quality on works of contemporary history. Firstly, in the return to the older version of the origins of the war of 1914, it is difficult to see a fraction of that scholarship which had been so impressive in the late 1920's and to which I have never come across any authentic or scholarly answer. Secondly, there does not appear to be the same texture in the narrative—a texture which results when history is written with a due respect for the complexity of events. Thirdly, the

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spirit of scientific enquiry—the desire to learn the truth whatever the consequences—is a recognisable thing; and we can discern it in a particular manner in that work of the 1920's to which reference has been made. It is the subsequent writers who so often make it clear that they are writing the history with their eye on a certain policy that they desire for the present; so that constantly somebody is trying to bluff us into forgetting the distinction between historical enquiry and political propaganda, though the distinction is a palpable one, and the modes of procedure are widely divergent. Finally, if an hysterical cry goes up when a person questions the popular or prevailing views on the origins of the war of 1914—if a Nazi-like howl is raised when anybody recalls the views of some of the writers in the late 1920's, and historical problems are settled by nick-naming the offender as a "pro-German"—this itself is a sign and proof that the times are not fitted for sober enquiry or judicious decision. Indeed, one must have grave misgivings concerning any contemporary history that is produced in such an atmosphere.

III

A second World War, on the top of what I have described, has produced in the field of contemporary history a situation not without its disquieting features. Even before the end of the war a mere outsider could hardly escape the impression that governments were preparing to race one another in the endeavour to state

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their case, whether by official histories or by the publication of selected documents. This we must regard as an object legitimate in itself, and academic students would be over-arrogant if they were to think that governments exist only in order that historians should be able to write about them afterwards. But we must never lose sight of the separate interests of officialdom on the one hand and academic history on the other, never allow the distinction to be blurred or the tension and conflict between the two to be quietened. A book was published during the Second World War and it happened that some time later I mentioned in print a curious howler that it contained. It was not very long before I was told that I ought not to be severe on the author on the ground that the book had been written for the Ministry of Information, in the Ministry's office, and in time spent as the servant of the Ministry. An outsider could not have realised this fact, but I am clear that work produced in this way should always bear distinct signs of its origin, and never be published in a form that would make the ordinary reader think it a normal example of disinterested and independent scholarship. In various other forms there is appearing a sort of history not avowedly official—pseudo-official perhaps, or semi-official, or sub-official—and I can well believe that in a certain sense of the words it would deny that it had any official character. Similarly there are "independent" academic historians, yet half-entangled in officialdom, controlled by the Official Secrets Act, even amenable to instructions, and not authorised to tell all the truth they know. It is not always quite

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clear that our leaders made the best possible bargain for the cause of independent history, a cause for which (in any case of default) it may happen that brother will have to fight brother.

We are now following the practice of the Germans in their days of victory and securing that we—not they—shall control that most subtle of all historical tasks, the selection of such of the diplomatic documents of the defeated Power as we shall allow to be published to the world. The Americans have produced on their own account a volume of these German documents relating to Nazi-Soviet Relations in 1939, and the book in two prefaces which are worded with extreme care and delicacy makes its bid to appear as the work of “independent” historians, a point concerning which there is a tendency sometimes to protest too much. The elements of policy in the commanding of this special series of documents at the time at which it was produced make it necessary to suggest (as one of those delicate matters which seem small but are really pivotal) that the term “independent historian” is in danger of undergoing a subtle change of meaning in our time. It is just by gradations of this sort that one would fear to see the situation deteriorate. It is just such hints of an inclination to compliance which justify our asking whether the official historians are fighting as unremittingly as we should wish and fighting always on our side.

We easily recognise fallacy and foolishness in the foreigner, and a useful way in which we can test either our own integrity or the wisdom of a technical measure is to remember what our reactions are when the parallel

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thing is done in a foreign country, especially a country that we happen to be observing with a certain jealousy. One of the gravest signs of what seems to me to be a decline from the principles explicitly instilled into me when I was young is an inability to step out of one's own shoes—and even a deprecation of any attempt to step into the shoes of others—and this is a sin which involves the overthrow of the essential discipline of history. In communications concerning our presumptuous view that we can “re-educate” the Germans in history, I have seen humour so far lost that, while German historiography has been regarded as national, whether it was Nazi or not, there has been a sublime and awful assumption that our own current version of the course of ages was the uncoloured “scientific” history—a thing appropriate to be imposed by direct transmission upon a defeated Power. When I was an undergraduate we were taught to mock the simplicity of German historiography in the Bismarckian era, which went so far as to produce “contemporary history” under Bismarck's wing, using the documents the great man himself chose to have revealed, and even allowing him to influence and interpret the historical accounts of his own activity. The future historian will certainly find it useful if all the Bismarcks are allowed to say as much as possible for themselves; but I seem to have noticed a tendency to believe that what was naïveté when it was done by the contemporaries of Bismarck is virtue now, and one is made to feel as though one were hitting below the belt if one suggests (what is certainly true) that there are many booby-traps for the historian in such a policy.

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A Foreign Secretary once complained that, while he, for his part, was only trying to be helpful, Professor Temperley (as one of the editors of the *British Documents*) persisted in treating him as though he were a hostile Power. Certainly it is possible for the historian to be unnecessarily militant, and even a little ungracious in his militancy ; but what a satisfaction it is to the student if he can be sure that his interests have been guarded with unremitting jealousy ! And if we employ a watchdog (which is the function the independent historian would be expected to perform on our behalf), what an assurance it is to be able to feel that we are served by one whom we know to be vigilant and unsleeping ! The ideal, in this respect, would certainly not be represented by the picture of a Professor Temperley and a Foreign Secretary as thick as thieves, each merely thinking the other a jolly good fellow ; for the historian who is collecting evidence—and particularly the historian who pretends as an independent authority to certify the documents or verify the claims of a government department—must be as jealous and importunate as the cad of a detective who has to find the murderer amongst a party of his friends : One of the widest of the general causes of historical error has been the disposition of a Macaulay to recognise in the case of Tory witnesses a need for historical criticism which it did not occur to him to have in the same way for the witnesses on his own side. Nothing in the whole of historiography is more subtly dangerous than the natural disposition to withhold criticism because John Smith belongs to one's own circle or because he is a nice man, so that it seems

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ungracious to try to press him on a point too far, or because it does not occur to one that something more could be extracted from him by importunate endeavour. In this sense all is not loss if our historian-detective even makes himself locally unpopular; for (to take 'an imaginary case) if he communicates to us his judgment that the Foreign Office does not burn important papers, the point is not without its interest; but we could only attach weight to the judgment if he had gone into the matter with all the alertness of an hostile enquirer and with a keenly critical view concerning the kind of evidence which could possibly authorise a detective to come to such a conclusion. And if an historian were to say: "This particular group of documents ought not to be published, because it would expose the officials concerned to serious misunderstandings", then we must answer that he has already thrown in his lot with officialdom—already he is thinking of their interests rather than ours; for since these documents, by definition, carry us outside the framework of story that somebody wants to impose on us, they are the very ones that the independent historian must most desire. To be sure, no documents can be published without laying many people open to grievous misunderstanding. In this connection an uncommon significance must attach therefore to the choice of the people who are to be spared. The only way to reduce misunderstanding is to keep up the clamour for more and more of the strategic kinds of evidence.

In keeping with this view, no matter whether the papers in question are those of one's own government

or those of an enemy Power, it would be essential, when documents are to be published, that editors should insist on seeing the whole range of original papers, known or inferred or suspected—seeing the originals themselves and not mere photostats provided for them: never saying that they have seen documents if they have only seen photostats, and never resting content if, say in the case of a German collection of photostats, they have seen only copies, possibly reduced in number, after rephotographing in some allied government department. It is essential that editors, if they suspect the existence of further documents, should pursue them unrelentingly, and, if they fail to find them, should give an account of this, making it their object to serve the historical student rather than to vindicate officialdom. And supposing there are gaps anywhere in the documentation—particularly in those sinister cases where a gap may exist at what for the government concerned happens to be a strategic point in the story—then there should be no limit to the detective work put into the matter and no limit to the precision in the account that is given to historical students. For at some time or other the world will take notice of this.

It is a mistake to imagine that the influence of government would ordinarily operate to-day in the kind of cases we are considering (any more than in the case of the Press) by the older, cruder modes of direct censorship; and both official historians and the general public are anachronistic when they formulate the issue, as they sometimes seem to do, in these simple terms. Where the publication of select documents is concerned there

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is one matter which the outsider cannot very well know about (but must wish to know), and that is the question of the machinery or the series of processes through which documents pass at their various stages of selection and elimination, particularly if there are places or cases where people other than historians (representatives of government departments for example) have any participation at all in the work or the discussions. It would even be useful if all the rules governing the work of official historians could be published; since it is conceivable, for example, that regulations restricting certain powers or privileges to a chief editor would raise an issue of some significance. But outside such realms as these there are ways of keeping official history "safe", just as there are ways (one is permitted to gather) in which a modern newspaper can be induced to exercise its own self-discipline in the interests of government. It is essential for everybody to be aware that the 'whole problem of "censorship" to-day has been transformed into the phenomenon of "auto-censorship"—a matter to be borne in mind even when the people involved are only indirectly the servants of government, or are attached by no further tie than the enjoyment of privileges that might be taken away.' It is even true that where all are "pals" there is no need for censorship, no point where it is necessary to imagine that one man is being overruled by another. And in any case it is possible to conceive of a State in which members of different organisations could control or prevent a revelation with nothing more than a hint or a wink as they casually passed one another amidst the crowd at some

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tea-party. I do not think that I am merely day-dreaming when I feel that in certain circles near to government a kind of contagious unanimity seems to exist at a certain level, even amongst men who, if we took them at a more superficial level, would say that they were only conscious of being in perpetual controversy with one another. It is like the case of Emerson, who, fighting perpetually against the New England Puritans, never suspected that he would be remembered in history only as another New England Puritan. Such being the situation, I think it was true even long ago that nothing could be more subtle than the influence upon historians of admission to the charmed circle; and in many fields besides the history of historiography we are able to confirm the fact that certain contacts (even if they are between Churchmen and the State) produce unconscious complicities and acquiescences—a well-run State needs no heavy-handed censorship, for it binds the historian with soft charms and with subtle, comfortable chains.

IV

When I ask myself whether Professor Temperley was justified in some of his apprehensions concerning the future, I remember the protest registered in 1946 in the journal *History* on the subject of the dispatches which it was proposed to publish from military commanders in places like Greece and Singapore. On being questioned

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in the House of Commons, Mr. Attlee had not only made it clear that those dispatches were to be altered in retrospect by the men who had written them in the first place, but had confessed that few if any of these dispatches would be reproduced in the exact form in which they had actually been written at the time. I have personally seen no reference to any effect which the protest in *History* had, and I do not know of any developments that have since taken place in the situation. The policy—if it has been persisted in—is different from one which might have allowed the commanders to write say in 1946 a totally new account of their experiences in a dispatch which would have held no pitfalls for the student if frankly dated 1946. There is no need for me to say that such a policy would be very serious indeed if it were to be extended to political documents of any kind without a plain key to the alterations made. The American editors of *Nazi-Soviet Relations*, 1939, guaranteed that no single document which they published had been in any way interfered with or had suffered even the slightest deletion. A precise and totally unqualified certificate to this effect provides safeguards against a subtle set of dangers, some of which (paradoxically enough) would not in the least be disposed of by a mere guarantee that nothing “relevant” or “important” had been omitted. The time has also come when assurances of this kind must be absolutely specific.

Indeed, where politics and diplomacy are concerned we require a more explicit and detailed statement by official historians and their critics of the appropriate maxims, criteria, and conditions of work—a point about

which I believe there has long been at least a sort of implicit understanding so far as military history is concerned, so that in this case we know where we are. From a scientific point of view the papers of any Foreign Office have an authenticity and a finality with respect to that Office's own policy which they cannot have in relation to the foreign policy of other governments; for in the latter case they do not show things from the inside, and it stands to reason that they are more often a matter of mere reporting. A volume of selected documents packed with such reporting might serve the non-scientific reader in that it shows up the policy of foreign States; and yet it might disappoint the serious research student, eager for that higher kind of documentation in which a Foreign Office really gives itself away. At the opposite end of the scale, I must say that one of the earliest things I learned as a research student in diplomatic history was that amongst the dispatches from ambassadors abroad the summaries of newspapers and of general gossip could be regarded as almost the least valuable of all. Such dispatches are no confirmation of the reports which they relay, and they are even one stage more remote from being first-hand than the newspapers, etc., which they are quoting. They can be used to make a case which might impress the general reader; but the technical student might expect the Foreign Office to know what was in the newspapers. In any event, nobody could deduce from selected materials of this type either the real extent of the intelligence possessed by the Foreign Office at a given moment or the things of which it was culpably ignorant.

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In the volume of the Gooch and Temperley documents relating to the crisis of July, 1914, are some minutes, reproduced in particularly small print, which provoked considerable controversy from the start, and have had a significance which is only likely to grow. Quotations from one or two of these occur on pp. 212-3 below. If they had not been printed (as they might well not have been) they would hardly have been missed; for when a volume of selected documents is in question the mind is hardly likely to have any impression of the things that are being withheld. If an official historian were to have excluded these as unimportant, he might have been sincere in his judgment, but the loss would have been great, for we have to consider the case of those people who have in fact made a different valuation of them—we have to consider that some historians at any rate have found great significance in these documents. If we should be told that only a selection of these minutes were printed in the volumes relating to the First World War, and that a larger reproduction of them would alter our view of events, then this would be an argument for giving us more of them—an argument at any rate for opening the documents to the free play of scholarship. It cannot be denied that the policy of publishing the minutes attracted great attention and earned the special gratitude of scholars at the time. If there were ever to be any new publication of Foreign Office documents the inclusion of the same kind of material was bound to be the chief controversial issue which the enterprise would raise.

Such minutes are not being reproduced in the further

sets of documents that are in the course of publication as a consequence of the Second World War. Those who argue that the public can do very well without them might refer to the case of the American State Department where it appears that material of this particular kind does not even exist. The British publications are generous in other respects, and as conditions of space allow ; they represent great industry devoted to the service of the public ; and if a better way had not been shown us already we must have felt how much gratitude was due for what we were being given ; we owe a great debt of gratitude for what we actually receive in any case. Regarded as revelations of British foreign policy, these volumes are not invalidated by the absence of the minutes or their equivalent ; as Professor Woodward frankly states, they are only rendered less adequate for the history of the way in which British foreign policy came to be arrived at and formulated. We must withhold perhaps a measure of our agreement on this point, however ; for the two things are not quite separable ; and the meaning or the purpose of an instruction sent to our representative in Belgrade may only be discoverable when we learn how the decision came to be arrived at and know something of the considerations which went to the making of it. There are understandable difficulties connected with the publication of minutes and policy-making material, especially at an early date after the event, and the cause of historical science in the next fifty years might have been better served by a little longer delay, though other interests might prefer the quicker publication even at

the expense of a certain quality. It must be remembered, however, that it is officialdom which makes the difficulties in regard to these matters, and which made its protests even twenty-five years ago, if we may judge from letters to *The Times*. Officialdom indeed always had its reasons for not wanting this kind of material to be published; but the interesting fact is that twenty-five years ago the interests of the historian were allowed to prevail. All things considered, we must scrutinise carefully any reasons that may be presented to us for not printing at the present day those minutes that come at a high level, or whatever may nowadays be their equivalent. And if at the finish there may be factors which render impracticable the publication of the materials in which a Foreign Office most gives itself away, we must at any rate be aware how the absence of these materials affects the historiography of the subject with which we may be dealing, and conditions any attempt that we make to reconstruct the story of a policy. It is the significance of this last point—and not a disposition to be ungrateful for what is in any case granted to us—that ought to guide our discussions of this matter.

The importance of the higher permanent officials of the Foreign Office is now accepted as a matter of common knowledge; and it has often been noted to what a degree a Foreign Secretary is in their hands. It has even been said that if the permanent officials cannot force their policy on a Foreign Secretary, at any rate they are strong enough to prevent him from carrying out any other policy of his own. The documents that would enable us to form an opinion on this matter would

not only serve the cause of historical science but would throw significant light upon a first-class public issue. It should be noted that those who conduct the ordinary official correspondence—the communications that pass between the Foreign Secretary and an ambassador at a foreign capital for example—have long been aware that, even without the eventuality of a war, their dispatches and telegrams may be published. One can learn many things from this more formal material, and it is a matter of no little moment that large selections from it should be printed in the way that is happening at the present day. Yet sometimes one can read a very great area of it without meeting the decisive revelation that really brings a matter home ; and once again the point is one that is sufficiently realised by historians when they are discussing the foreign policy of any country except their own. Some of us waited jealously to see whether in the case of the publication of the captured German documents the same principles would be adopted as have been employed in the selection of our own diplomatic papers. They have not ; and those who care to disentangle the ordinary diplomatic correspondence from the more confidential type of document in the volumes of German papers can judge the measure of the importance of the revelations which only come from the particular kind of material that we are here discussing. It is the people most responsible for the real development of our foreign policy—though they may not be technically responsible to Parliament—who gain remarkable cover from the decision to exclude that material in the case of the English series. These sub-

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governmental, sub-ministerial actors in the drama are bound to be the real objective of a genuine enquiry into British foreign policy; and the real secrets—indeed the real problems in some of our minds—are situated in the very nature of things at this level. It does not require a knowledge of the materials that are withheld from us to enable us to see that the documents which are being published are insufficient for the genuine reconstruction of British foreign policy.

Since the printing of this particular material was bound to represent the crucial issue, the complete freedom which the editors declare to have been given to them by the Foreign Office has operated as a very effective discipline. It is not surprising that an American critic, referring to the case where the editor of documents is at the same time the "official historian" of the department concerned, should have pointed out how civilians in such a position may develop "a security consciousness even more pronounced than that of the professional Foreign Office official". Since the Foreign Office exercises the checks mentioned at the beginning of this article; since its archives were for a long time open to students generally only until the 1880's and this period has recently been extended only until 1902; and since the Foreign Office is notoriously canny if independent enquirers require a free hand with materials twenty years out of date, we should require firm proof of the real willingness to give up the final secrets to scholars in general. If documents are not open to scholarship in general, the insistence on the completeness of the liberty allowed by the Foreign Office may only testify

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to the confidence which that Office has in its official historians. It does not matter if all the reticences of the Foreign Office are based on consideration for personalities, for all the things that historians want to know are connected with personalities. There are perhaps no "secrets of State", for they are all secrets of human beings—and it is those that we wish to see revealed.

All this, as we have said, does not invalidate the publications of *British Diplomatic Documents* or prevent their having great value for us within their limits. It does show, however, that "official history" is stealing a march upon us, as between one generation and another; and we are no longer quite so sure that a jealous outside historian is invading the Foreign Office to push our interests without regard to the reticences that officialdom may desire. What would have to be regarded as most perturbing of all perhaps—since it would mean that our "official historians" were becoming accomplices in an effort to lull us to sleep—would be any suggestion that the materials which are withheld for the time being are things which do not matter for purposes of historical reconstruction. Here is a point where a cause might easily be betrayed almost in absence of mind. It is a point that goes to the very basis of historical science.

V

Those who are not trained in the construction of historical narrative are very seldom aware of the radical way in which a story that has been built up on a given

framework—shaped to a certain assumed structure—may be recast, so that it is replaced by an edifice based so^o to speak upon an entirely different ground-plan. Some people imagine that if a man conducts research on a particular area of historical happening the effect will be that one fact here and another fact there will be corrected ; or that the same story will be told as before, only it will be told in greater detail ; or that the narrative will merely be amended or supplemented at some marginal points. The result is far more radical than this, because total reconstructions are often necessary when a certain fact has proved to be pivotal or requires not merely to be added to the other facts but to be followed out in the displacements it produces amongst the rest. One of the high tests of an historian is the degree to which he possesses the requisite elasticity of mind, so that he is not a mere compiler adding new facts to old ones, not a mere prisoner of a current framework of story, but a detective determined not to miss the clue that may lead to a fresh reconstruction of the theme and carry the issue to a higher order of thought.

For this reason, when selections of documents are published on behalf of one government or another, it is not sufficient simply to read them, or to imagine that a précis of the printed correspondence will provide us with the main ribs of the narrative. The compiler—even when he is not conscious of the fact—will have been governed by that framework in his selection of the documents, and though the documents may seem to prove his case, the argument is really a concealed argument in a circle. What is needed is detective work

at every inch of the way and close collation with other available documents—for otherwise we might in any case be locked in the views of a single Foreign Office. All of this may lead one to the discovery that a single document is more important than all the rest—the exclusion of one document out of three hundred is even capable of destroying the clue to the whole series. Since Charles James Fox made speeches in Parliament during the crisis of 1792, it might be imagined that there was nothing more to be said concerning his general political attitude, and especially his attitude to parliamentary reform. When we learn, however, that to one of the chief leaders of his party Fox had written on the very eve of the crisis that in regard to parliamentary reform, “I am more bound by former declarations and consistency, than by any strong opinion I entertain in its favour”—when we see Fox writing to one of the firmest of all the enemies of parliamentary reform, “I very much doubt whether the part which you have taken on the question be not upon the whole the most manly and judicious”—we realise that even a story so apparently plain is going to require a radical kind of reconstruction. For these reasons it has come to be recognised that the study of a piece of diplomatic history is bound to be unsatisfactory unless more intimate documents can be discovered to give keys to the interpretation of the formal diplomatic correspondence. The editors of the German documents are anxious to stress the point that the documents which they publish are insufficient for the interpretation of the more seamy side of German policy ; but this argument

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is equally true of the publication of the official correspondence of any Foreign Office. Furthermore, it is bound to be true of diplomatic papers published in these circumstances—and it is particularly true of those which are being published after the Second World War as editorial comments show—that the editors will be preoccupied with the question of the responsibility for the war itself, and this preoccupation will govern the selection and the unconscious framework of the series. But a selection which is adequate for this particular publicistic purpose may be insufficient for the purposes of scientific research.

It has even proved possible in the history of historical science for a release of diplomatic documents to carry students further away from the truth than before, if the release has not been a total one. When Frederick the Great opened the Seven Years' War in 1756 he claimed that he had been provoked by the discovery of a dangerous conspiracy against him. The partial opening of archives in the mid-nineteenth century made men more sceptical of his assertions than before—for ambassadors, far from giving any hint of such conspiracy or tension, were even found to have commented on the quietness of the diplomatic situation in the very period in question. When there is a secret conspiracy, however, it stands to reason that this will only show evidence of itself in the more secret diplomatic correspondence of the time; and though some minute detective work came near the truth, it was only when the archives for this period were fully opened from the 1860's (revelations completed when in 1912 the Russian

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Imperial Historical Society published the documents of a secret Russian Council) that it became clear that the conspiracy had been more dangerous than Frederick ever knew. Only when the last drawer was unlocked did we discover that what required to be explained was a certain gullibility that Frederick had shown in the period when the conspiracy was being developed.

VI

The fact that the whole framework of a story is capable of transformation as historians work upon it is a matter of special importance at the present day ; for that history which is most liable to large-scale structural revision is contemporary history—the first version of events as they appear from the special platform of particular actors in the drama, often indeed a version used for militant purposes in the conflicts of the time. It is not at all clear that, in ways which we cannot predict, we, like our predecessors, may not have to meet sooner or later some different reconstruction of our age, which will challenge our infelastivities of mind and shake the validity of things that we never thought to question. And though we can never know in advance what the course of historical revision is going to be, we can train ourselves in a certain amount of flexibility, especially by keeping in mind the alien facts that are recalcitrant to our present system of orthodoxy. A slight discrepancy in regard to the perihelion of Mercury—a discrepancy so small that it was not even measureable

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in the case of the other planets—called for the radically new synthesis of Einstein to explain it and to embrace all the known elements in the case. In regard to a piece of history there are always many facts which are intractable whatever system we adopt, and there is always a chance that one of these may be our perihelion of Mercury. There is always a chance that in one of the cases the discrepancy will become more monstrously intractable as time goes on.

Where the origins of the war of 1914 are concerned there has always been one of these pockets of anomalous fact, and so far as some of its aspects are concerned some historians have been perturbed by it for over twenty years. Much of British diplomatic policy in the nineteenth century was carried out under the shadow of an awful obsession concerning what came to be known for a long time as the Russian bogey. Some of us can remember how still in our young days, in the years before 1914, we heard people speak with bated breath of the colossal power that Russia seemed likely some day to become. Our grandfathers were sometimes inclined to suspect a Tsar unjustly or to quarrel with him unnecessarily, when at bottom their anxiety was one for the future—a haunting fear of what this Russian colossus might come to be like. Since it is the formidable power of Russia which has made Communism so dreadful to us—and has made our attitude to it so different from what it was fifteen years ago—an historian, building his outer framework for a century of story from 1850 to 1950, might regard the fear of Russia as one of the most permanent features of British policy in that period,

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if it had not been for the curious interlude of some thirty years from 1914. And one thing we can say in advance even concerning our successors: we can be certain that historians will ask whether it was during that interlude, or during the periods before and after, that Englishmen slipped into a little day-dreaming.

It does not appear to be the case that even in 1914 we revised our basic calculations concerning the magnitude of Russia's power, whether as it existed at that time or as it seemed likely to become in the future. It is anachronistic to hold that at that time we regarded the Triple Alliance as stronger than our Triple Entente, for we made bad miscalculations even in those days, and we had had a growing feeling that the Entente was the stronger and was increasing its lead. To a dispatch of 18 July, 1914, announcing that by the winter of 1916 Russia would "possess an active army greater in numbers than the joint forces of the Triple Alliance Powers" and stating that "the Russian Navy estimates now exceed the British ones", Sir Arthur Nicolson, Permanent Under-Secretary of State, appended a minute, not deprecating the report in any way, but saying: "Russia is a formidable Power and will become increasingly strong. Let us hope our relations with her will continue to be friendly". On 1 May, 1914, Sir Edward Grey told Poincaré that, if ever Germany attacked Russia, people in Great Britain would be inclined to say that, though Germany might have successes at first, Russia's resources were so great that, in the long run, Germany would be exhausted without our helping Russia.

When the last volumes of the *British Documents* were

OFFICIAL HISTORY: ITS PITFALLS AND CRITERIA published in 1938, an American historian, Professor Raymond Sontag, not only noted how great was England's fear of Russian policy and power—which affected us in our Asiatic interests as well as nearer home in the period before July, 1914—but added the opinion that in the light of these documents we must say that England had greater dread of Russia than of Germany. We were so afraid—so conscious of the immediacy of the threat on the side of Russia—that we felt it essential that this Power should be our ally. In July, 1914, Sir Edward Grey, who has been criticised for his subservience to expert advice at the Foreign Office, was warned by his experts that “the moment has passed when it might have been possible to enlist French support in an effort to hold back Russia”. Sir Arthur Nicolson wrote in connection with a telegram of 24 July from St. Petersburg: “Our attitude during the crisis will be regarded by Russia as a test and we must be careful not to alienate her”. If our views concerning the Russian boggy changed, it would require clear evidence to override these testimonies and to convince us that we had altered our assessment of the formidable nature of Russian power.

Concerning the general policy of the Powers in the years before 1914, Professor Temperley wrote: “I fail to see any respect in which Russia was better than Germany—and in some respects she was worse”. Since England came under criticism later for not holding back Russia a little more in 1914 it is interesting to note that a few months after the outbreak of war we reversed all the traditions of our foreign policy by promising

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Russia Constantinople in a secret treaty ; and Sir Edward Grey tells us in his memoirs that he had to do it because, even so early, it was the only way in which Russia could be induced to stay on in that war from which in the previous July he had been advised that it would be unwise any longer to try to restrain her. We know that from the beginning of that war Russia was determined to acquire Constantinople ; and the matter did not come into the story as an afterthought. And if there was a certain disappointment in England when it turned out that Turkey was to be our enemy in that war, it is interesting to see, from the revelations of the Soviet historian Pokrovsky, how anxious the Russians were from the start lest Turkey, by becoming our ally, should cheat them of the opportunity of the desired reward. But for the Russian Revolution, which was not in our calculations or conjectures at the time, Russia would have emerged from the victorious war in 1919 with something like her present territory in Europe, and indeed (owing to the resulting disposition of power), with something very like her present sphere of influence and control in the Balkans and Central Europe. She would have had Constantinople to boot.

The power and sinister tendencies of a Russia are not a negation of the power and the misdeeds of a Germany, but they do impose upon us the difficult obligation of keeping two areas of force in our survey at once, two dangers in mind at the same time. And it is this which we must note as the possible case of the historian's perihelion of Mercury—this fact that, so far as one can judge, there were two things which people

OFFICIAL HISTORY: ITS PITFALLS AND CRITERIA ought to have been thinking about at once. If the historian is looking for his perihelion of Mercury—his intractable fact which may be the hint for a higher synthesis—there are two collateral points which he might notice, since they are of the kind that ought always to make the historian prick his ears. When Mr. (later Sir) J. W. Headlam-Morley, Historical Adviser to the Foreign Office, wrote his introduction to the *British Documents* relating to the crisis of July, 1914, the points where his remarks revealed official anxiety concerning the way in which readers might interpret the documents—and a clear desire to guide the reader—were those relating to the Russian side of the question. Moreover, the two remarkable cases of omissions from the 1914 Blue Book, which he felt it necessary to notice in his Introduction (though his explanations are not entirely satisfying), also had reference to Russia's part in the crisis, and denote the existence of similar anxiety even in 1914. Headlam-Morley's remarks may all be taken at their face value—as an anxiety to prevent misinterpretation rather than to guide interpretation—and in this case it may be asserted that they are of no relevance to our argument. But they represent the kind of points that ought never to be overlooked; and our attitude should depend on what happens when they are seen in relation to the other evidence.

If in the case of the First World War we felt that our policy should to such a degree be subordinated to Russia's, it is not irrelevant to note that Professor Seton-Watson told the Royal Historical Society soon

after the end of the Second World War that this too ought to be regarded as essentially a conflict between German and Slav—the greatest Slav war in all history, he called it. When the matter is viewed in this way our vision certainly is widened to comprise the two giants within a single survey, though this particular formulation of the case, precisely because of its large element of truth, might well inspire us with other kinds of misgiving. But since at various times in the twentieth century it was a matter of current speech that Germany and Russia were competing for the domination of Europe, and since even the blindest among us can hardly fail any longer to see that Communism and Fascism are not authentic antitheses but are twin forms of the same revolutionary and totalitarian menace, one of the greatest of the issues that now face the contemporary historian is the question whether for thirty years we have not construed our contemporary history within too narrow a framework—whether we have not been dominated too completely by short-period considerations and by too constricted a survey of the map of European forces. We may have been as virtuous as we assert, or at least we may have been well-intentioned, but both our historiography and our diplomacy may still be open to the charge of unimaginativeness if, while Germany and Russia have been alternate menaces for over a hundred years, we have failed to widen our vision—failed ever to think of more than one of these possible menaces at the same time, failed to envisage two possible enemies and dangers at once, failed even to see how far they could be made to act as a mutual check and thus cancel

one another out to some degree. Lord Morley, when he opposed war in 1914, asked what this country would do with a victorious Russia if German power was destroyed. Professor Temperley, in an article written to defend the Entente cause against certain misrepresentations, came to the conclusion that on the whole issue Great Britain was justified in going to war in 1914. He added the further question: Was she wise? And he did not give the answer to that.

It was a tradition of British foreign policy that we should always fight any single Power that threatened to dominate the Continent. But by that same argument we could always keep our heads above water, always find a game to play, if there only were two giants competing with one another. If only there are two of these monstrous ogres striding the Continent and confronting one another, then even the smaller States in the neighbourhood can hold back far more than their own weight of that arrogant power. For our perihelion of Mercury we have the further anomaly, the new thing that is so unlike the traditions of British foreign policy; the fact that recently more than once we have made it our avowed political object so to destroy one of the giants that half a continent was left at the good or bad intentions of the other. Nothing could be more calculated than this to make even the intentions of that remaining Power take a turn for the worse, however virtuous they might have been hitherto. And though in the case of these two giants the one danger might at a given moment be more immediate and pressing than the other, so that a careless indifference on our

part might have given that Power the mastery of Europe before its rival could so to speak catch up, still it is not clear that our views need have been so constricted or our diplomacy so confined to the immediate prospect. It is just one of the real functions of diplomacy to tide a country over such a time-lag and keep the world on its feet till it gets round the dangerous corner ; and in any case, as we have seen, this was not the predicament that was being envisaged in 1914 when the power of Russia was creating such awe. Furthermore, if war in such circumstances had been unavoidable after all (as might well have been the case), even such a war might have been fought to a different purpose and a different tune.

Precisely because there is so much malevolence—and still more potential malevolence—in the world, it is necessary not to despise the maxims which embody the experience of more than a single lifetime and which were directed to the safeguarding of a precarious civilisation, in other words the minimising of the area over which the malevolent might have sway. There was an ancient diplomatic science which one would wish one could be sure was not forgotten in our time ; and it was while executing one of its maxims that Bismarck achieved what was perhaps the greatest diplomatic victory he ever gained in time of peace. That victory enabled him to postpone an apparently inevitable war and the postponement continued almost for thirty years ; and the whole predicament was extraordinarily parallel to that of Europe in the twentieth century, for it centred around the self-same struggle between Russia and Austria in the Balkans. According to the maxim

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in question, in a conflict for domination between two such powers as Kaiser and Tsar, or Germany and Russia, or Nazism and Communism, one should say (as Bismarck was prepared to say at worst in a parallel situation): "Let the rascals fight it out if they like; but intervene to prevent whichever one it might be from destroying the other; because it is necessary for the safety of civilisation that both should exist and operate as a check upon one another". The atrocities committed by a given Power do not invalidate the maxim; for, as we who have broken it will learn to our cost, it is a maxim for limiting the area of horrors and atrocities. If the gentle go as lambs to the slaughter, that is one matter; but if they think to resist violence, they cannot afford to despise prudential counsels.

In any case, all these are facts which a new synthesis, a new reconstruction of the history of recent decades, may find it necessary to take more adequately into account. It will be clear to anybody whether the recent decades themselves have fairly faced them or whether there has been a disposition to hide them and to gloss them over. But when all the terms of the problem are laid out—when the widest canvas is envisaged and the long-term view is set beside the short-term view—it is true that we do not know what reshapings this chapter of history will have to suffer; we cannot even predict where the point of effective controversy will lie. Controversy may even turn on the view which has been attributed to Sir Arthur Nicolson that if we offended Russia she might ally with Germany against us—a danger which not all of us, on the survey of a century of history, would

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be ready to take so seriously. It is even possible that the quarrel of pro-Chamberlain and anti-Chamberlain is being allowed to mask other and greater issues ; and supposing officialdom in the 1940's has decided that anti-Chamberlainism shall be its framework of reference, a history drawn up on that basis need not be regarded as any the less " official history " for that. It will be paradoxical if it turns out that the men who are despised for shirking a war with Hitler in the 1930's were just the ones who were paralysed because they foresaw, like Lord Morley in 1914, the menace that would come from Russia after the destruction of Germany.

Further than this, even moral issues may be used for the purpose of distracting the mind from a genuine analysis of a problem. If there is a crime-wave we may allow Scotland Yard a time for weeping and a further time for moral indignation, but while there is a chance that the police-system has made mistakes or acted on wrong assumptions we cannot be satisfied to have Scotland Yard (or in a parallel case the Foreign Office) just saying : " All might have been well, but it isn't fair that criminals should be so wicked " (whether the criminals are German or Russian). It is the function of foreign policy to create situations in which virtue does not depend on a great Power's good intentions, but is ensured on the whole by the general disposition of forces. It may transpire that our greatest errors in recent decades have been things which were common to both the Chamberlain and the anti-Chamberlain factions. In any case, the influence of official history and of semi-official orthodoxies tends to discourage any

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serious attempt to re-examine the whole framework of
the history.

VII

Up to the early 1900's, when historical scholarship in England came to its peak in men like Acton and Maitland, words can hardly describe the admiration for Germany—and the confessed discipleship—which existed amongst English historians. I have tried to examine the nature of the objections which the more recent British historiography has had not merely against Nazi perversions but against German historical scholarship in general; and if there is a formula for the complaints that have been made, I often feel that these go back to a factor which characterised the general framework upon which the Germans ranged or mounted their European history. We certainly seem to have disliked one of their main structural ideas—namely, the general claim which seemed to be made that Germany had stood as the guardian and bulwark of a thing which they called Western Civilisation. Perhaps because of the nature of our alliances and sympathies we were repelled by the suggestion that the Germans were defending the culture of the West against the less civilised East. English historians seem sometimes to have regarded this division between West and East as a German racket or ramp, for such a view of European history lent itself to the purpose of providing modern German diplomacy with some of its rationale. I have always personally felt, however, that there was

very much to be said in favour of holding this particular idea as, so to speak, one of the ribs in the framework of our general European history, and it seems to me that for over a period of fifteen hundred years the threat from the East was almost the only menace to our civilisation that came near to being a mortal one. It had long been my feeling that we should have to come back to that structural idea ourselves, and if I am not mistaken, Mr. Churchill has already given expression to the view that there is a Western Civilisation that must be defended against the less civilised East. An off-print that I have recently received from America suggests that the same basic idea has begun to affect the framework of European history in some quarters there. To those who have tried to picture the Germans as the eternal aggressors it might be answered indeed that there never was any danger to European civilisation like that which for century after century came via the Black Sea region, which culminated in the Mongols and Turks, which remained a menace till the close of the seventeenth century, and which was only still being thrown back as the Turks were shouldered out of the Balkans in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The minds of men are prone to deadly inelasticities and we are perpetually repeating the kind of error we made in 1814-15, when we thought of France as the perpetual aggressor.

One of the aims of the study of history is to secure that we shall be less the prisoners of such inelasticities; and that, by taking long-term views and broader surveys, we shall transcend the outlook of a given Foreign Office that is bound to be engrossed by immediate

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problems and is liable to be too intent upon short-term objects. The whole interpretation of history which has been more or less consciously adopted for the purpose of fighting Germany actually prevents us from adjusting our minds to the situation and to the possible conflicts of this new era that has now arisen. If nothing else were true it would still be true that, just as Francis Bacon urged the re-examination of obvious things like gravity, density, heat and rotation (in the heavenly bodies), so we need a more scientific analysis of the reasons why the twentieth century became an age of terrible conflict, why the peculiar forms of modern barbarism could emerge, and why (human nature being what it is) a Power at a certain period takes to dangerous aggression—points which, if we ever understand them more deeply, are calculated themselves to alter the form and framework of all our contemporary history. ,

We have not analysed aggression—analysed what it is that makes now Spain, now France, now Germany appear as the “perpetual aggressor” or the aspirant after “universal dominion”, and instead of analysing it we make a myth of it. Until we have more scientifically examined it we are as lost as physics was without the understanding of gravitation. If the present strained relations with Russia continue, then the popular and more or less official interpretation of history current in England for thirty years and more—the whole “Foreign Office view of history”—is doomed by the very laws which brought it to birth, doomed though every other suggestion in this paper prove to be fallacious. It is doomed to crumble and fall even if

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nobody in the world troubled to strike a blow against it. It cannot survive the new intellectual framework which policy, propaganda and historiography will put into currency if for any long period the present situation continues in Europe.

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I

IT was long the custom for the more self-consciously scientific school of historians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to aggrandise themselves by asserting that their more serious kind of historical study was a thing of recent origin. This whole branch of learning had been held back, according to their allegations, by the fact that hitherto it had been regarded as a mere form of literature. The opponents of the dryly academic school of writers have in turn been only too content to allow the discussion to take place on the basis thus provided—a basis which helped no doubt to flatter even their self-esteem as well (though in a somewhat different way) and assisted them in what perhaps were little aggressions of a gentler sort. Professor Trevelyan may make the remark with a different innuendo, but he too, for example, is willing to say that until comparatively recent times history was regarded as a branch of literature. When hostile parties happen

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to agree on an important thesis, however, we must be careful not to be caught out, not to be surprised into a suspension of historical criticism. And just as Bolingbroke has been shabbily treated in English history because both Whigs and Tories have had an interest in prolonging misconceptions about him, so, in regard to this question of historical study we must be prepared to find the two main antagonists acting in connivance with one another to pull wool over the eyes of the rest of us. In any case, those who study the history of historical science—even the local and recent history of it in their own universities—must scrutinise very carefully the things which historians say about themselves. Still more must they be on guard against things which historians say about the state of their science in the times immediately preceding their own.

Even in the late seventeenth-century, controversies were taking place concerning the effects of the Norman Conquest, the character of medieval society, the feudal nature of Magna Carta, the meaning of the term "free-man" in ancient documents, and the date and the implications of the changes which led to the establishment of the House of Commons—controversies curiously akin to those of the last fifty years, and conducted in a highly technical manner. They were carried on in books, some of which were as unreadable as anything with which I ever remember trying to cope—the documents shovelled together without any regard for literary form, and everything much more indigestible than in the modern treatises on the same subjects. Already in the middle of the sixteenth century it was noted that

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there were two kinds of history—that of the chronicler and that of the lawyer; and Pullen, the editor of a volume of statutes, pointed out that the chroniclers tended to be occupied with tales of war, while it was the lawyers who made a profounder study of law and government. From that time the kind of history which we should call “narrative” developed through compilations which it would be flattery to describe as literature—works sometimes entitled “abridgements of the chronicles”, and formed by patching together entries and extracts from a number of the ancient writers. It was the other kind of history, however, the lawyer’s history, which proved to be the remarkable stimulus for the future and the source of significant change; for it brought about early in the seventeenth century the first great development in historical science in this country—the rise of what we call the Whig interpretation. Even at the next great stage in the story of English historical writing—the period after the Restoration, when the reaction against Whig history came into full swing—the chief representative of the new era, Robert Brady, though he was one of the most remarkable figures in the history of historical study in this country, would hardly be described as a man of letters even by the wildest lover of paradox. Recent work on Robert Brady has shown, furthermore, that though he far excelled the older legal writers in his analysis of not merely law and government but also society, he failed to incorporate this kind of analysis into the fabric of an ordinary narrative. When he turned to write an actual history of England he produced a work which was still

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in direct line of descent from the "abridgements of the chronicles".

It is possible, then, to exaggerate the literary character or intention of the historical work that was being produced as long ago as the seventeenth century. At the same time it is possible to over-dramatise the conflict between the men of letters and the men of learning, by doing less than justice to the scientific labour and intentions of the literary historians of more recent times. The modern academic teacher of history has shown no reluctance—so far as I can see—to press upon the student the importance of writers like Gibbon and Macaulay. Lord Acton, speaking in times when scientific history was at its most proud and arrogant, remarked in this connection that after all one great man was worth a dozen immaculate historians. Acton, furthermore, took part in what must have been two very interesting conversations on a point closely related to this issue. In the one case he, Stubbs and Creighton asked who was the greatest historian the world had ever produced; and they decided in favour of Macaulay. The other occasion was more imposing still; for this time it was Acton, Mommsen and Harnack who debated the same question; and these higher giants of an international learned world settled the issue in precisely the same manner. Professor Pollard, who held so high a place in the study of the Tudor period in the last generation, wrote in 1904:

It may be remarked that there is inadequate justification for the systematic detraction of Froude's *History* which has become the fashion. He held strong views, and he made

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some mistakes ; but his mistakes were no greater than those of other historians and there are not half-a-dozen histories in the English language which have been based on so extensive a survey of original materials.

To these preliminary points, which help to set the terms of our discussion, we may add the fact that history—apart from certain strange breeds of it that have emerged in recent times—is a thing which naturally lends itself to discourse in continuous English. In a purely conventional sense, therefore, it may be regarded as a branch of literature, even when it is written by students whose intention is primarily scientific. The mere possession of a happy prose style or a neat way of constructing paragraphs, however, will not necessarily decide that a given historian belongs to the literary school rather than the scientific. We may also note that at certain periods the man of letters—writers like Smollett, Southey or Scott—may turn to a kind of historical compilation, just as modern poets have turned on occasion to writing historical pot-boilers. Of such people we may say, however, that it is not this side of their work which really seems to have given them their place in literature.

On the other hand, it appears to be the case, particularly in the nineteenth century, that a number of writers more self-consciously set out to establish the position of history as literature, conceiving that the literary arts as such had something to contribute to the study of the past and the development of historical comprehension. They not only wrote history on a considerable scale, but they put the case for their peculiar view of it in various

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kinds of polemical writing ; and we must open our minds to the possibility that in England at any rate they are a stage in the history of historiography, playing an important part in a significant transition. I propose, therefore, to look at those people whom I believe we generally have in mind when we speak of the more literary kind of historian—people like Macaulay, Carlyle and Froude in England, or Motley and Parkman in the United States. And the question we will ask is : whether, by prepossessions and aptitudes which really belong to the craft of letters these writers have affected our appreciation of the past and contributed to the development of historical study as such. We will enquire whether the structural necessities or the artistic opportunities of literary form stimulated further devices of historical understanding ; and whether the literary imagination—the form of it which exists in the poet, or at least in the dramatist—was a factor in the development that took place.

II

If we take the word “ history ” as it is normally used at the present day, we shall find that it covers—and sometimes it causes us to confuse—two different functions, two different ways of treating the past. At one time we tend to think of history as a work of “ resurrection ”, and we attempt to resuscitate a bygone age, or recover the personality of a man, or establish what actually happened at a certain time ; alternatively, we try to

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reconstruct a scene, a situation, a predicament or a crisis. At another time, however, we tend to think of history as rather an endeavour of analysis and a study of the processes that have taken place at one period or another; and in this case we do not ask: "What was the Cabinet like in 1750?"—we rather put to ourselves the question: "How did Cabinet government come into existence?" We do not ask: "What were the Puritans like?"—we enquire, shall we say, "What part has religious non-conformity played in the making of the English tradition?" One kind of historical writing will show us, step by step, the way in which Martin Luther came to an irremediable cleavage with the Papacy. It depicts and narrates, and we need it primarily in order that we shall know what was that past (or that particular period of the past) which we may happen to be envisaging at a given moment. The other kind of historical writing may try to work out the general causes of the Reformation, or the importance of the Reformation in German history. So it does not portray but rather analyses and dissects.

Concerning these two ways of treating the past, we may say that the former has more particularly belonged to literature and makes its appeal to all men, whether they have had any training or not; while the latter involves more of the thinking of the specialist, and occupies a considerable place in the technical equipment of the historian, so that it is one of the things which are a legitimate object of a university education. In a manner which was perhaps unavoidable, because it is typical of the way in which things happen in life, the

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function of the historian has in fact been subjected to the division of labour, and it has been the literary men who have tended to stress history as "resurrection", or have concentrated on the descriptive and narrative part. The truth is that to delineate a scene; to depict a personality; to portray a political crisis in all its urgency; to narrate a series of events, and to reconstruct the past in a manner that will enable people really to enter into it and feel the situation properly—these things not only require the art of literature in order to give form to the conception which the historian is seeking to communicate; they require something of the imagination of the literary man to shape them in the first place—to turn a bundle of documents into a resurrected personality and to see how a heap of dry facts, when properly put together, may present us with a dramatic human situation.

The literary historians, when discussing their own craft, have naturally emphasised that kind of history which is "resurrection", or they have even assumed that history entailed nothing more than this. Thomas Carlyle, writing on a new edition of Boswell's *Johnson*, gives us a typical statement of their point of view.

Rough Samuel and sleek wheedling James [he says] *were*, and *are not*. Their Life and whole personal Environment has melted into air. The Mitre Tavern still stands in Fleet Street; but where is now its scot-and-lot paying, beef-and-ale loving, cock-hatted, pot-bellied Landlord... The Bottles they drank out of are all broken, the Chairs they sat on all rotted and burned; the very Knives and Forks they ate with have rusted to the heart and become brown oxide of iron, and mingled with the indiscriminate clay. All, all

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has vanished; in very deed and truth, like that baseless fabric of Prospero's air-vision.

According to Carlyle all such things have their moment, with one eternity of darkness before them and another that is to come after them; and while they enjoy their brief existence the axe of fate hangs over them, waiting to cut them off. "This Book of Boswell's", however, this *Life of Johnson*, comes on the scene to deliver them from the dark fatality. Such a book, we are told, is significant because it stands as "precisely a revocation of the edict of Destiny". Carlyle expresses something that is universal in human nature, though he does it in a mood and in a manner which seem to be born from the Romantic movement. He sees history as a work of salvage, an attempt to clutch dead men and things from annihilation. Alternatively he sees it as simply an answer to our own desire to have the past living again before our eyes.

It stands to reason that for this kind of historical purpose the condition that a work should be accurate is as relevant as it could be for any other kind of historical purpose. When we meet the kind of history which is "resurrection", we legitimately ask in the case of a narrative: "Did this really happen?" and in the case of a description: "Was this the genuine state of things?" Carlyle once said, "Let any one bethink him how impressive the smallest historical *fact* may become as contrasted with the grandest *fictitious event*". When we are reading about the Protectorate it affects us if we cannot rely on the portrait of Cromwell that is being presented to us; and we know it is not the same thing

at all if, instead of even the pretence of a Cromwell, we are offered a fictitious personage through whom the characteristics of the age are merely illustrated. The documentation of Macaulay's *History* is sufficiently defective if we compare it with all that is known or available at the present day; but in its own time it represented an advance, and amounted to a contribution to learning, especially in respect of the reign of William III. The materials and methods used by Carlyle when he reconstructed the battles of Frederick the Great, as well as the notes that he made when he visited the battlefields themselves, have shown how he balanced, collated and criticised his authorities, using one for this purpose and another very properly for that, while making judgments, even to the detriment of Frederick, after an independent estimate and survey of the resulting narrative. It has been pointed out that Froude was the first Englishman to enter the rich repository of documents at Simancas. The literary historians did not by any means try to check that development of manuscript research which was proceeding from comparatively simple beginnings in their time.

The insistence of the literary historian on the process of actual "resurrection" has a definite significance for all who are students of the past. It stands as a corrective to some of the defects of the scientific analyst and to those general surveys which abridge and telescope the course of centuries. It carries the consequence that the men of the past are regarded as—in a certain sense—ends in themselves, and the life of a given generation is envisaged as a world to be studied for its own sake.

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The Tudor Englishman is not merely a link in a chain which leads to the twentieth century, but is recognised to have existed in his own right. The dissolution of the monasteries is to be regarded as more than merely a factor in the transition to the modern economic world. Professor Trevelyan has pointed out that it is not enough to know the technical reasons why the Roundheads defeated the Cavaliers in the seventeenth-century civil wars—reasons which a writer of tabloid history might reduce to a series of formulas. He tells us that “the feelings, speculations and actions of the soldiers of Cromwell’s army are interesting in themselves and not merely as part of a process of cause and effect”. In reality we may go further than Professor Trevelyan did, and say that unless the life of the past is envisaged for its own sake, in this way, and the personalities themselves recovered just for love, the scientific analyses that we make will be liable to aberration, and we may go wrong in our very attempts to relate cause and effect. A further point which Professor Trevelyan has put forward brings this whole line of argument to a climax, and presents us with one of the most important statements that could be made about the study of the past. He is really telling us that there is a defect in that kind of history which sets out to tabulate the successive stages of human development—the kind of history which sees Galileo as merely preparing the way for Newton, and Wycliff as nothing more than a stage on the road to Luther. “It is not man’s evolution but his attainment that is the great lesson of the past and the highest theme of history”, he says. In other words, it is wrong to

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neglect the internal study of the art of Leonardo da Vinci, the work of Dante, the spiritual achievement of St. Francis, the intellectual system of Aristotle or the whole Renaissance art of living. These things represent triumphs of the human spirit, and if we pass over them we are neglecting the very things most fitted to be studied as ends in themselves. Historians may be tempted to behave sometimes as though only those things are worthy of attention which gain importance from the fact that they led to something else.

Froude, in his biography of Thomas Carlyle, gives further development to the case for the kind of history which is "resurrection". More sober and less romantic than this latter historian, he shows even the scientific necessity of reinstating before our eyes, as far as possible, the past in its entirety. On his view, even those who make it their object to analyse the past and to have theories about it, must first find out what actually happened, and must learn to see it as it happened, rich with all the complexity of life itself. Somebody must get the play, *Hamlet*, written, he said, and you must have the play in front of your eyes, you must see the story unfolding itself, before you can begin to have theories of *Hamlet* or elucidations of the drama. Ecclesiastical historians, constitutional historians, etc., draw their specialised chains of facts from history, and may reach conclusions as a result of what in reality are concealed arguments in a circle. The truth is that history and nature run riot over our academic compartments and sub-divisions. The story of *Hamlet*, as found in the source which Shakespeare used, may lead

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to lessons or inferences which seem self-evident, precisely because there is something imperfect in the specialised or partial way in which the events are narrated. Shakespeare's own Hamlet is more like a picture or reproduction of an actual piece of life ; and, confronted by the spectacle which the dramatist provides, "the mind passes from commonplace moralising to the tragedy of humanity itself". Froude continues :

Whether the history of humanity can be treated philosophically or not ; whether any evolutionary law of progress can be traced in it or not ; the facts must be delineated first, with the clearness and fulness which we demand in an epic poem or a tragedy. We must have the real thing before we can have a science of a thing. When that is given, those who like it may have their philosophy of history, though probably they will care less about it ; just as wise men do not ask for theories of Hamlet, but are satisfied with Hamlet himself.

The literary historians then, by the nature of the case, tended to conform to one of the modern criteria, in that they set as their ideal the reconstitution of the historical moment in all its fulness, concreteness and complexity, and with all the incidentals gathered into the picture. I think I should be true to Froude's meaning if I illustrated it by saying that a partial, selective story of the seventeenth-century constitutional struggles in England might prompt the reader to strong parliamentary predilections in the case of one author and to royalist conclusions perhaps in the case of another. But if one could see the whole story in its fulness and complexity one would cease to hanker after this kind of judgment or decision. Everything else would be submerged in

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one's sense of what Froude calls "the tragedy of humanity itself". No attempts to summarise an age by means of formulas and general theses can be anything but harmful unless we keep in mind that jungle of life for which they provide the merest abstraction and diagram. No selective account, such as we find in ecclesiastical history, or when we study the development of the idea of sovereignty—no schematisation, no patterns of process or evolution—can avoid giving rise to misconceptions, unless we perpetually refer these things back to the general narrative and sink them into that broader stream of human life which the literary historians were so concerned to reproduce. Perhaps it would not be entirely wrong to suggest that the scores of people who in the last one hundred years have continued the research into the reigns of James II and William III were co-operating to produce what ideally would be another Macaulay's *History* if the process could ever complete itself—a Macaulay's *History* revised and deepened and transcended. For this is the fundamental necessity, the presumed final object of the historical endeavour, the thing we should really call history at the last stage in the argument.

III

The emphasis on the conception of history as the "resurrection" of the past induced the literary historians to insist upon an enlargement of the actual subject-matter of historical study. They demanded that the

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historian should cast a wider net for the truth and collect a more varied range of materials into his survey. It is essentially the literary imagination that is at work when Carlyle turns aside from the thought of a great battle to remember that "in its thousand remote valleys a whole world of existence was blooming and fading while the famous victory was won or lost". Similarly, after a vivid, violent depiction of the taking of the Bastille he lifts up his head, widens the range of his survey, and says :

O evening sun of July, how, at this hour, thy beams fall slant on reapers and peaceful woody fields ; on old women spinning in cottages ; on ships far out on the silent main ; on Balls at the Orangerie of Versailles, where high-rouged Dames of the Palace are even now dancing with double-jacketed Hussar-Officers ; and also on this roaring Hell-porch of a Hôtel-de-Ville.

Macaulay in his Introduction to his *History* writes :

I should very imperfectly execute the task which I have undertaken if I were merely to treat of battles and sieges, of the rise and fall of administrations, of intrigues in the palace and debates in the Parliament. It will be my endeavour to relate the history of the people as well as the history of the government, to trace the progress of useful and ornamental arts, to describe the rise of religious sects and the changes of literary taste, to portray the manners of successive generations and not to pass by with neglect even the revolutions which have taken place in dress, furniture, repasts and public amusements. I shall cheerfully hear the reproach of having descended below the dignity of history, if I can succeed in placing before the England of the nineteenth century a true picture of the life of their ancestors.

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Elsewhere he tells us :

The circumstances which have most influence on the happiness of mankind, the changes of manners and morals, the transition of communities from poverty to wealth, from knowledge to ignorance, from ferocity to humanity—these are, for the most part, noiseless revolutions. Their progress is rarely indicated by what historians are pleased to call important events. They are not achieved by armies, or enacted by senates. They are sanctioned by no treaties, and recorded in no archives. They are carried on in every school, in every church, behind ten thousand counters, at ten thousand firesides. The upper current of society presents no certain criterion by which we can judge of the direction in which the undercurrent flows. We read of defeats and victories. But we know that nations may be miserable amidst victories, and prosperous amidst defeats. We read of the fall of wise ministers, and of the rise of profligate favourites. But we must remember how small a proportion the good or evil effected by a single statesman can bear to the good or evil of a great social system.

“The thing I want to see,” says Carlyle, “is not Redbook Lists, and Court Calendars, and Parliamentary Registers, but the LIFE OF MAN in England; what men did, thought, suffered, enjoyed.”

Mournful, in truth, is it to behold what the business called “History” in these so enlightened and illuminated times, still continues to be. Can you gather from it, read till your eyes go out, any dimmed shadow of an answer to that great question : How men lived and had their being ; were it but economically, as, what wages they got, and what they bought with these ? . . . How my Prime Minister was appointed is of less moment to me than How my House Servant was hired. In these days, ten ordinary Histories

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of Kings and Courtiers were well exchanged against the tenth part of one good History of Booksellers.

Imperfectly as they might have executed it, such writers had the vision of a broader kind of history than was envisaged by the descendants of the chroniclers and the old narrators. They saw need, at any given moment in the story, of holding in the imagination some picture or impression of the broad sweep of life in the world; and, if only because they began by being so pictorial in their historical reconstruction, they discerned first the interest and then the importance of economic and social changes. It would seem that their vision of social history was a thing which it was difficult for them to put into execution; and too often they were content with a purely static picture—they would stop the cinematograph film of history at a certain point (as Macaulay did in 1685) and produce a painting of still life, a portrait of the world as it happened to stand at a particular time. Even Professor Trevelyan's *Social History of England*, which is genealogically descended from this practice, suffers from being so largely a mere succession of just these pictures of still life—not a cinematograph film but a series of lantern slides. And the notion of a history of the English people hardly had justice done to it in the *Short History* of John Richard Green. Perhaps only very recently have we come to conceive of a social history of a country which shall not be merely amorphous, like the panoramic descriptions of the older historians, and not a mere succession of "stills", but the story of a developing structure. And perhaps only a high degree of literary art can solve the problem of portraying a

movement that takes place in different dimensions—delineating the past in its broad expanse for example, but showing also that it is moving all the time.

It is even true to say that the polemical and critical writing, as well as some of the creative work, of the literary historians contributed something to that development of historical-mindedness which was taking place in the nineteenth century. They helped students to become conscious of the fact that when one confronts a different age of history or a different country from one's own, there are transpositions to be made in the mind, there is something that has to be done with one's personality. Carlyle once wrote, for example :

Along with Tombstone-information, perhaps even without much of it, we could have liked to gain some answer in one way or other to the wide question : What and how was *English Life* in Johnson's time ; wherein has ours grown to differ therefrom ? In other words : What things have we to forget, what to fancy and remember, before we, from such distance can put ourselves in Johnson's place ; and so, in the full sense of the term, *understand* him, his sayings and doings ?

A very important stage in the process of historical understanding is involved in the point that Carlyle is making here—the question of what we have to forget, what we must remember, and what can only be supplied by our imaginations if we are to translate ourselves into a different kind of historical world. And the imagination of the historian is at one with the imagination of the literary man—the dramatist or the story-teller—in the particular exercise to which Carlyle refers, namely the effort to put ourselves in another person's place. The

restrictions and still more the constrictions which prevent our achieving this result even when we think we have achieved it form the most serious limitation upon historical understanding, and indeed upon human comprehension generally, at the present day.

Over and above the things that have been noted on the subject of literary historians in general, we must take cognizance of the remarkable fact that the science of history has been enriched even by the achievement of the historical novelist. This is not difficult to understand, for historical abridgements may present us with mere formulas sometimes, and chroniclers may cheat us with unexplained events or with facts that seem to have no particular context. The historical novelist, on the other hand, if he takes his work seriously at all, is inescapably confronted with the problem of seeing a former age in its concrete detail, and on its own terms, and with its proper setting. Macaulay is one of the people who have confessed the indebtedness of the historian to the historical novelist.

Sir Walter Scott [he says] . . . has used those fragments of truth which historians have scornfully thrown behind them, in a manner which may well excite their envy. He has constructed out of their gleanings works which even considered as histories are scarcely less valuable than them. But a truly great historian would reclaim those materials which the novelist has appropriated.

Macaulay, furthermore, makes the interesting remark that hitherto the world had had to look for "one half of King James in Hume, and the other half in the *Fortunes of Nigel*". The view that any single event of the past

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must be envisaged in relation to the whole historical scene, so that one can be aware of the context in which it occurred; the view that apart from court and camp and government department there was a history to tell which was the story of ordinary men, and there was survey to be made of the broad expanse of England; the view that historical characters were to be understood by a kind of internal penetration, by the exercise of imaginative sympathy, and by an extension of the art of seeing oneself in another's place; the view that the story of intimate, everyday things has an interest and a certain importance in one's reconstruction of the past; the view that Renaissance Italy must be apprehended as a different kind of world from Anglo-Saxon England or nineteenth-century Serbia—all these things have gained much from the historical novelist, because in a narrative of everyday life the historical novelist could not possibly escape the problem they presented. On the other hand, the scholar, the antiquarian, the compiler and the analyst had often been able to avoid these issues to a considerable degree. Before Macaulay, the French historian, Thierry, had learned from Scott the difference between an imaginative appropriation of the past and a mere dry erudite compilation. And if the Romantic movement went too far and led to aberrations—led, for example, to visions of a medieval world that could never have had any existence—one must not imagine that the mental exercises that were involved in the romantic endeavour were without their significance in the development of historical study.

In two of the prefaces to his novels Sir Walter Scott

put his finger on what is perhaps the most important contribution that historical fiction can be regarded as having made to historical study. At the opening of *Ivanhoe* he describes, in the general terms which an historian might use, the relations between the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans in England some time after the Norman Conquest. We all know, however, that a mere formula for a general relationship, such as this, is poor matter for the mind to brood upon, unless the student can picture how the consequences would manifest themselves in the concrete world, in the detailed happenings of life; there must be some sense of the kind of predicaments and situations which that general relationship would be liable to produce. Scott brings fiction to help out our historical imagination, to transform the general statement into a concrete picture; and the early dialogue between Gurth and Wamba in *Ivanhoe* enables him to plunge into the task of showing in detailed specification what the generalised formula has behind it, what the mere piece of historian's shorthand really signifies. Similarly in the introduction to *The Monastery* he announces his intention of showing what the Reformation conflict actually meant in terms of human life and vicissitude. He consciously uses the novel in order to transpose the generalisation of the historian into a picture of tangible things.

It was said of Scott that "He had something like a personal experience of several centuries". He so soaked himself in the Covenanters that he did not need to remember things about them—he could think their way and feel what they would do or say in various kinds

of situations. He served the cause of history more by his novels than by any of the actual history that he attempted to write, which indeed came far short of the kind of thing to which his fictional work was aspiring. Even if nobody ever reads him any more he will remain significant in the history of historical science not for the light which he throws on any age of history, but because he revealed so much concerning those operations which are possible to students of the past for the achievement of historical-mindedness. Some of the examples that I have mentioned suggest that the literary historians of the nineteenth century were the mediators between Scott and our modern historiography.

Those of us who at the present time are engaged in the study of some particular period of the past have come to be aware of the importance of unloading our minds of all remembrance of after-events. For certain purposes it is important to follow the story of the year 1788 without that particular bias which comes from the fore-knowledge that the French Revolution was to occur in the following year. And we are liable to fall into fallacies or optical illusions if we judge every step in the negotiations of July, 1914, in the light of our awareness that they were certain to issue in a European war by the close of the month. The historical novel does of course demand on the whole that its author shall unload from his mind, and withhold from the reader, the knowledge of the after-event; for the whole undertaking to portray life is vitiated if the chanciness, the tensions and the surprises are allowed to be eliminated. The detailed narratives of the larger literary histories

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stand in this respect in a position remarkably similar to that of the novel; and it happens to be clear that Macaulay in particular—who had it in mind to make a story, and who was a fascinating narrator—was extremely conscious of this point, and even made notable use of what it could provide in the way of artistic opportunity. In his general descriptions he might make the mistake of perpetually comparing the state of England in the seventeenth century with the condition of things that existed in the nineteenth; but as a narrator he made great use of the element of surprise and he would attempt to see the events of 1688 as though he were a contemporary spectator. Indeed, it has been noted that he “expatiates on all the preliminaries of an action till he has awakened in us something like the excitement of those who are watching and waiting for the event”. Before presenting his narration he would point out all the circumstances which seemed to give promise that things would take a different turn, or he would describe the expectations that were entertained, so that these could be contrasted with the event which actually took place. Alternatively, he would speculate on what might so easily have happened if one circumstance or another had been different. The artistic necessity of the sheer narrator, and the demands of literature as such, conspire to promote some of the conditions for historical thinking, which requires the adoption of this particular point of view.

The literary historians who are here in question were not the first to introduce imagination into the study of history by any means, but it was part of their rôle to

assert the place of imagination in historical construction—not the imagination which invents things, but the one which enables us to visualise them concretely or which helps us to penetrate into the interior of not-like-minded men. It has been said of Vico, who did so much to inaugurate a more historical way of viewing things in the eighteenth century—and it has been equally true of other people since that time—that in their attempts to understand the earlier stages in the world's history they have been assisted now by remembering how things struck them when they were children, now by recalling something they had seen when observing the successive stages of a child's development, and now by considering something anomalous that they had noticed when they were studying a contemporary peasant. It has been suggested that a sympathetic friendship with a modern Franciscan might give a person half a clue to the comprehension of something in St. Francis of Assisi. And it seems to be recognised that Carlyle contributed something to the comprehension of Cromwell by virtue of a certain affinity which he must have recognised here and there, and which gave him an end of the string to get hold of. In the last resort historical students must be like actors, who must not merely masquerade as Hamlet on one night and King Lear on another night, but must feel so and think so, and really get under their skins—the defective historian being like the defective actor who does not really dramatise anything because, in whatever rôle he is cast, he is always the same—he can only be himself.

Froude went further and said that the historian has to produce the play or the epic, and is compelled to do this

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under conditions much more difficult than those under which Shakespeare wrote, because he is chained to the factual truth of everything. According to him, if the life of an historical Hamlet had actually involved the very incidents which Shakespeare described, then Shakespeare's *Hamlet* would be the ideal manner in which to reproduce the story for a future generation. Professor Trevelyan makes a point which constitutes a valid claim for the kind of literature that is history, especially as the history which is "resurrection" addresses itself not merely to the specialist but to every man. He demands "not merely the accumulation and interpretation of facts, but also the exposition of these facts and opinions in their *full emotional and intellectual value* to a wide public by the difficult art of literature". We may see a foreign statesman in the gravest apprehension or a foreign government in a terrible predicament, but we may make serious misjudgments because we fail to feel the situation and to measure it in terms of emotional stress. Historians may speak to one another in shorthand, or may often feel or understand more things than they trouble to make explicit. Literary activity of a high order is necessary if it is ever important not merely to reconstruct a high moment of history, but to indicate the "feel" of it and to "put it across".

IV

Unfortunately, the two kinds of history which I have mentioned—the one which seeks to resurrect the past

and the one which examines the processes of time—can never be really separated without misfortune. On the one side we have seen already that our analysis of the course of things may be defective if we have failed to reconstitute the historic moment in all its fulness. On the other side mere narration and description are in danger of being too intent on scenic display, too pre-occupied with the mere surface of things; and perhaps it is this—rather than mere impatience with the drudgery of research—which is responsible for the most serious organic weakness in literary history. If the Renaissance painters found it necessary to study anatomy for the purpose of portraying the human form, if Leonardo da Vinci's geological interests can be divined in some of the landscape that he put into his pictures, it is equally true that historical description and narration must have the analyst behind them, and in defect of this the result will show a faultiness that is really a lack of structure.

The literary historians, though they never realised or intended it, were apt to be too merely pictorial in their attempted resurrections of the past. Carlyle, as he was writing his *French Revolution*, revealed it as his intention "to splash down what I know in large masses of colour that it may look like a smoke and flame conflagration in the distance". It has rightly been pointed out, however, that he gives us his remarkable flame-pictures, but does not really show us why the Revolution passed from one stage to the next. The literary historians were extremely anxious to recapture scenes, to visit sites, to make us see how a given landscape centuries ago differed from its present form, and to portray the outer man or

the spectacle that an historical situation presented. Macaulay was less interested in natural scenery than in the landscape as man has made it perhaps, and it has been said of him that even in the case of a town he liked to describe not so much the way it sat into the landscape but rather its human and commercial physiognomy. Carlyle is a more elaborate pictorial artist, able to reproduce scenery and mass movements of men or armies in graphic manner ; and he could describe " with surpassing power the grand operations of nature in its more terrible aspects " or reproduce the atmosphere of a panic situation or a passionate moment or a gentle scene. The American author, Parkman, makes a great use of scenery as part of the apparatus of historical reconstruction.

At a stage removed from this the literary historian had an eye for dramatic situations and dramatic groupings ; and, whether he compared himself with an ancient historian or with the writer of an epic, a drama or a novel, he was inclined by his literary sympathies to stress the portrayal of character and the reflection on human vicissitude ; though Carlyle would show a profounder feeling than Macaulay here, and not only added vivid touches to the picture of the outer man, but entered more subtly into the sympathetic description of inner experience. Carlyle now " surveys mankind from an Olympian height ", now walks at the side of his hero, now enters into his internal life ; and some of his creations or resurrections, like his portrait of Frederick William I of Prussia are extraordinary artistic achievements. Beyond this point, however, these writers were

lacking in analytical power as historians; and if Macaulay could compare the year 1685 with the present day he failed to see how many things had developed during the course of centuries, or how understandable many of the anomalies of a past age can be when they have been placed in their proper setting. Carlyle could see vague, profound, intangible moral reasons for the French Revolution, but he had no inkling of the nature, the structure and the human implications of the *ancien regime*. These writers made a contribution to the historical explanation of the past, but they remained in what one might describe as a limited world of explanation. Macaulay has some excellent expository passages, but he evades problems that are of an exacting nature.

Above all, the great literary narratives, though they gain in one respect, lose in another way, from the fact that they take us through so much of the story as though we were contemporary observers of it. The survey of events as a contemporary might see them is a necessary constituent, but is only one of the constituents of a genuine historical view. It is a feature of contemporary history that problems of structure and organisation are avoided—the narrative tends to assume a certain shape from the mere fact that the narrator is taking sides. The chief structural defects of the literary historians spring from the disadvantage that in their hands the whole story would marshal itself in a certain way because the author was identifying himself with one of the parties against the other. These writers were not always conscious of the defect, and Macaulay lets fall certain criticisms of the Whig historians which show that he did

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not consider himself as belonging to this class, or intend to write history as a partisan. But the effect was palpable and showed itself—as was notably the case with Macaulay—in a readiness to apply historical criticism to the evidence which came from enemy sources, while it did not seem that there was the same pressure to probe the quality of the testimony that came from one's own side. This limitation in their work greatly facilitated the task of the literary historians—particularly Macaulay, Froude and Motley—for it enabled them to close their eyes to complications and anomalies which would have called for a reorganisation of the whole story. The procedure in fact leads to the evasion of the most challenging historical problems, it encourages an over-dramatisation of the issues, and it provides the stimulus of violent contrasts, it produces that warmth and glow which so easily come when we have identified ourselves with one of the contending parties. Sometimes the supporters of literary history have actually defended such partisan writing on the ground that it so facilitates the task of the historical writer, while impartial history is so much more difficult to read with sustained interest.

Acton, in spite of his passion for scientific methods, was ready to concede that partisanship and polemical purpose had helped to contribute to historical understanding; and it is true that these things have operated to drive historians further than they would otherwise have gone in the search for a reasonable explanation of anomalous conduct on the part of the people they were inclined to support. What is important to note, however, is the fact that the defect in analysis, the weakness

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in that whole side of historical study which examines the processes of things in time, is the necessary cause or counterpart of what appears as bias in the literary historians. It is more easy to say that Charles I was a wicked or a wilful man than to describe in seventeenth-century England the development of a situation that produced serious dilemmas and predicaments for honest men of both sides. When the large organisation of the narrative is wrong in this way, and the profounder enquiries are evaded because mere partisanship can find an easy answer to the problems that arise, the history is vitiated at precisely those points where people draw lessons from it and make the inferences that are to affect their conduct. From the point of view of present-day utility and general moral education, the defects of the literary historians, therefore, must be regarded as a serious matter. They contributed greatly to historical understanding in their own time. But our whole apprehension of human conflict in past centuries has advanced so far ahead of this that we cannot afford to allow the clock to be put back.

